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Glimpses of grace in
Afghanistan ...p. 16

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60th year of publication

He is risen!

He bore our griefs

No, it was not the Jews who crucified,
Nor who betrayed You in the judgment plaxe,
Nor who, Lord Jesus, spat into Your face,
Nor who with buffets struck You as You died.

No, it was not the soldiers fisted bold
Who lifted up the hammer and the nail,
Or raised the cursed cross on Calvary's hill,
Or, gambling, tossed the dice to win Your robe.

I am the one, O Lord, who brought You there,
I am the heavy cross You had to bear,
I am the rope that bound You to the tree,

The whip, the nail, the hammer, and the spear,
The blood-stained crown of thorns You had to wear:
It was my sin, alas, it was for me.

Jacob Revius

Translated by Henrietta Ten Harmsel

On the Resurrection

If Christ remained but six hours on the cross
after a few years of sorrow and affliction,
which he suffered willingly for humankind
that heaven might be purchased forever,
why is He everywhere to be seen
painted and preached only in torments?—
which were light compared with the joy that followed
when the wicked world's cruel blows were finished.

Why not talk and write about the majestic Kingdom
He enjoys in heaven and soon will bring to earth
to the glory and praise of His worthy Name?
O foolish crowd, because you are so earthbound
and have eyes only for the day of His ordeal,
you see His high triumph shorn of its true worth.

Tommoso Campanella
trans. Sherwood E. Wirt

Easter

A woman with shoulders bowed only since Friday
steps deep into death's lair.

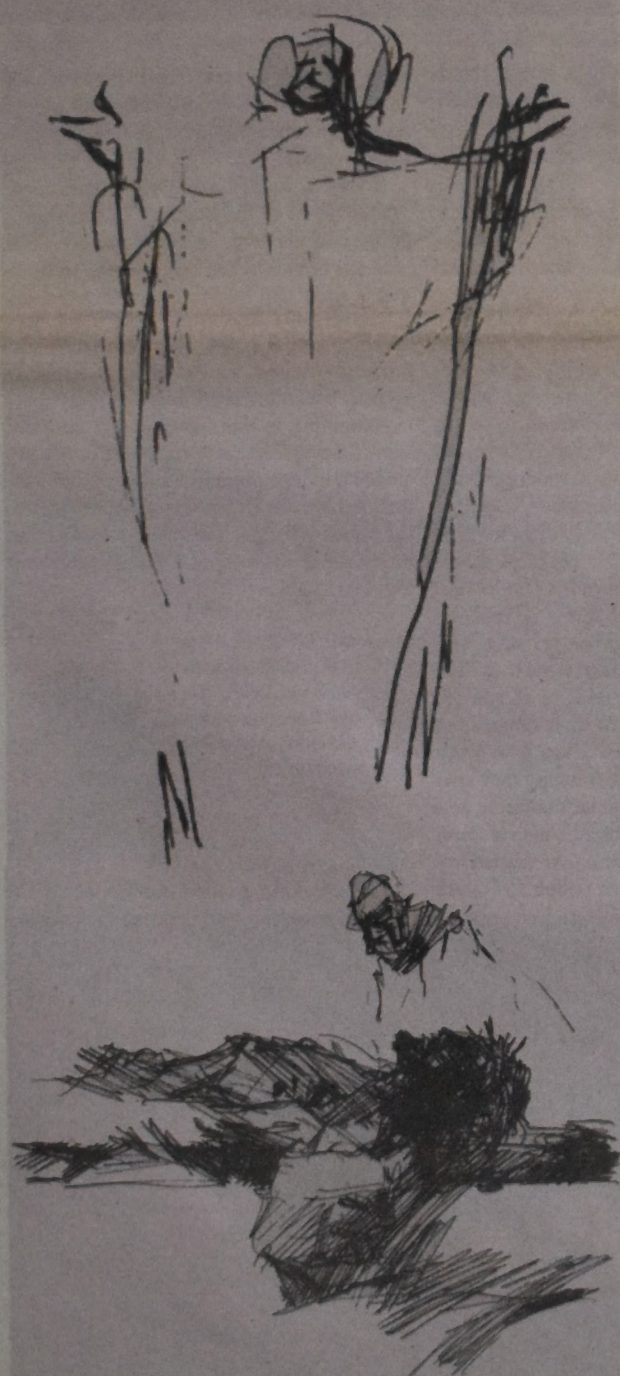
Stupified by guilt or sorrow or not caring,
the town had been silent as she passed.
Behind the hedges insensible cyclamen
and violets drink life from the dawn,
giving their moisture back to the sky.
They too should have perished with Him,
blasted to their very root hairs
tenacious in the ground. Gather
some for Him and with the aloes
make an ointment for His bloodied brow.

O joy! Her bitter myrrh
had become obsolete at daybreak.
Through ground and rock,
sky, sea, and stars,
He bursts His putrid casing
and confronts the universe!

She folds the linen, taking it home
to wash from it the stench of death,
joyfully laying it out in the forever sunshine.

Carolyn Keefe

I came upon these drawings of Jesus Christ by
Luc Freymanc quite by accident on the Web.
There are already over 600 that you may view.
He intends to do a total of 1000. To see more go
to: <http://www.freymanc.com/>



Roots

At last: a long delayed homecoming

By God's grace I have recently been privileged to play a small role in enabling my father to revisit the village of his birth, which lies in the Turkish-occupied zone of Cyprus and was thus off-limits to him for over a generation. Dad was born three-quarters of a century ago in Koma tou Yialou, whose name means exactly what it is: *village by the sea*, along the coast of the Karpas peninsula in the far northeast of the island. Dad left Cyprus for good in 1949 and moved to the United States two years later to attend a bible college in Chicago, where he met my mother. I was born a few years thereafter. In 1974 a series of events left the island divided between its ethnic majority Greek and minority Turkish inhabitants. Until three years ago it was virtually impossible to cross from one side to the other.

In April 2003, however, the occupation authorities in the north suddenly and unexpectedly decided to open the so-called Green Line to allow relatively free passage between the two sides at designated crossing points. This was done as a good will gesture in advance of Cyprus' entry into the European Union – as a reunified state, it was hoped. One year later the United Nations' plan to end the island's division failed when it was voted down by the Greek side. Yet there would be no going back on freedom of movement.

Dad returned to Cyprus more than once thereafter, with thoughts of returning to Koma as well as to Famagusta, where his family lived in his youth. Yet something held him back. Would he be reviled or mistreated because he was a Greek Cypriot?

Fast forward to August 2005, when I received a phone call from Dad. Would I try to track down a childhood friend via the internet? His name was Abdullah and he was a Turkish Cypriot from a neighboring village. He and Dad had been like brothers when they were growing up. Every year Abdullah would send a Christmas card to my parents, but without a return address on the envelope. When my parents moved a few years ago, there was no way to alert Abdullah to this, so contact came to an end. Hence Dad's request.

I told Dad I'd give it a try. I started with the ubiquitous Google but without success. Abdullah is an extremely common Turkish name and, even when paired with his surname, too many hits came up. What to do? Providentially, I had been subscribed for several months to an email list, "Return to Varosha, Famagusta, Cyprus," which brings together people with some connection to the heavily touristed Varosha district of Famagusta, south of the old walled city and an uninhabited ghost town since '74. I decided to put out an "all points bulletin" for Abdullah on the list, not expecting any more success than I had had with Google.

But scarcely 24 hours later, I had a response from a Turkish Cypriot who knows Abdullah personally. He referred me to the

website of his holiday resort near Kyrenia and I was quickly able to download the contact information for Dad. The following day a phone conversation took place across 10,000 kilometres, as two old friends talked and wept together for the first time in nearly six decades. I felt blessed to have played a part in bringing them together.

Shortly after the turn of the year Dad was back in Cyprus, this time with my sister and brother-in-law and two of their daughters. Abdullah drove down to the south part of the island and brought them back with him to Kyrenia. Whatever fears Dad may have had about visiting the north vanished. Everyone – even the guards at the Green Line – welcomed them with open arms, and they were overwhelmed by the hospitality of the Turkish Cypriots they met. Whatever animosities might once have existed between the two ethnic communities were nowhere in evidence during this long delayed homecoming.

In addition to seeing such famous sights as the ruins of Bellapais Abbey near Kyrenia – built during the Frankish occupation (1192-1489) – and Othello's Tower, in the Venetian walls surrounding the old city of Famagusta, Dad and the other family members were able to visit two places associated with his upbringing. In Koma tou Yialou they found the houses where Dad and his mother were born – now in ruins. They found Koma largely deserted, except for a very few families who seemed to speak neither Greek nor Turkish. (Could they be Kurds illegally settled from the Turkish mainland?) His late uncle's halloumi cheese factory is now a café, one of the few signs of life remaining in his village. Someone also appears to be keeping the descendants of his uncle's extensive herd of sheep, which were much in evidence during their visit.

They were also able to see the house where Dad's family lived during the Second World War, located just inside the walls of Famagusta. They had moved there hoping that Hitler would refrain from bombing antiquities. The house still sits on a street corner, across from the Church of St. George Exorinos, also known as the Old Nestorian



Koma tou Yialou

Church. In the garden of the house stands a lemon tree that Dad himself planted, as he did many of the trees in the church yard. Someone obviously lives there and is keeping up the property.

It is difficult for me to imagine the emotional impact of seeing one's homeland for the first time in decades and in such an altered condition. I am reminded of Thomas Wolfe's immortal novel, *You Can't Go Home Again*, the title of which has become a cliché. Or Peter Masterson's 1985 film, *The Trip to Bountiful*, in which Geraldine Page's character stops at nothing to return to her hometown in rural Texas, only to find its decaying buildings long since deserted as the land was depleted and its young people moved to the city. Dad himself has told me that, among other things, he feels that a burden has been lifted from his shoulders.

As for me, I experience a mix of emotions. It was in part the invasion and partition of Cyprus that moved me to devote my life to the study of politics at age 19. It is because so many lost their homes and homeland back then that I am who I am and do what I do. So I feel happy that Dad was finally able to complete the circle and return to his roots. But there's also a sense of melancholy that the land that shaped my father is bereft of its own people, who are

now reduced to recalling it nostalgically from afar – from London, Toronto, Chicago and Melbourne – but loving it no less despite their absence.

There is finally a sense of frustration. A frustration at the inability of the ageing politicians on both sides of the divide to heal the breach when there seems to be so much good will on the ground. Ordinarily I find myself impatient with those who facilely romanticize the grassroots and vilify politicians. However, in the case of Cyprus I cannot help thinking that there is something to this, particularly since the same leaders have been running the country since its independence in 1960. Perhaps the next generation of leaders on both sides of the divide will have the courage to put aside the hurts of the past and put Cyprus back together again.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is the author of the award-winning Political Visions and Illusions (InterVarsity Press). His weblog can be found at:

<<http://byzantinecalvinist.blogspot.com/>>.



Lion of St Mark on the walls of Famagusta



Famagusta house with lemon tree



Easter

Resurrection rhythm narratives

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Repeatedly throughout the muggy August day, Bonnie's name popped into my mind. But I didn't stop to call her. I gardened. I laundered. I cooked. And still the thought of this needy woman, to whom I had previously brought food vouchers on behalf of my church's diaconate, nagged at me.

Finally, by late afternoon, I decided to pay attention to the pressing thought before my kids came in the door, dirtied by field work and anxious to hurriedly eat supper and dash off to their soccer games.

When Bonnie answered my call, she said, "So, you got my message."

"What message?" I asked.

"I called your church and left a message on the answering machine because I need food."

Goose bumps rose on my arms. "No one called me to tell me," I said. "All the staff is on vacation so no one got your message."

"So, why did you call?" She asked.

Yes, why did I call? Because I had finally stopped what I was doing and listened to the still, small voice of the Lord urging me to call one of his children. When I realized what had happened, I knew I had witnessed God's power to care for his people – a manifestation of Easter's resurrection rhythm that beats in my life and in all believers' lives.

When Mary Magdalene went to Jesus' tomb on the first Easter morning, she had no idea that a new cadence would characterize her existence from then on. Finding the stone rolled away from the tomb's entrance, she assumed that someone had stolen the body of her Lord – stealing her opportunity to offer her last loving gift to him, the anointing of his body with spices.

At least that's what she assumed until Jesus called her name, "Mary!"

Joyfully she ran to the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" (John 20:18).

The resurrection rhythm had begun to beat in Mary's life. The refrain of J. Croegaert's song, "Was It a Morning Like This," captures the power and exhilaration of Mary's new reality: "Over and over like a trumpet underground, did the earth seem to pound – 'He is risen!' Over and over in a never-ending round, 'He is risen! Alleluia! Alleluia!'" (© 1978 Meadow Green Music Co./Heart of the Matter Music).

Years later the resurrection rhythm continues to beat in another Mary's life, as well. Since the tragic murder of a teenager in our community in 1991, my friend Mary has faithfully followed media reports, praying specifically for the girl's family as they faced grueling circumstances. During the intervening years she never once saw the girl's parents, but she prayed that God would let their paths intersect so that she could show them his love.

A few weeks ago in a busy grocery store, Mary caught sight of the parents – the father's face gaunt and the mother's expression vacant. As soon as she noticed them, she knew that God had answered her prayer. She thought to herself, "I can't miss this opportunity."

That's when, in her mind, she heard the words, "That's my mum" – an affirmation that this woman was indeed the slain girl's mother.

Later, while checking out her groceries, Mary glanced up and noticed some flowers for sale. She asked her husband to add a bunch of pink carnations to their purchases, while keeping her eye on the murdered girl's parents getting ready to pay for their groceries and then to leave the store.

In the parking lot, Mary walked over to the mother. Even though Mary was trembling for fear of invading the mother's privacy, she handed the flowers to her and said, "Just to make your day a little brighter."

A soft expression came over the woman's face as she looked into Mary's eyes. The women embraced. In the background, the murdered girl's father said, "Thank you!"

Mary hurried to her van, praising God for answering her prayers in his time and in his way – another demonstration of Easter's resurrection rhythm.

Thirteen years ago I recognized the pulsating resurrection rhythm when another friend of mine, whom I will call Camellia, told me the following story which included two dressers – one that she owned as a child and the other that she had as adult.

When Camellia was a child, she had noticed that her dresser was repeatedly moved over a few centimetres even when she returned it to its position kitty-corner in her bedroom. When she asked her mother why it was always moved, her mother said the vibrations of the passing streetcars caused it to do so. In actuality, Camellia later learned, her abusive stepfather kept shifting it so that he could peek at her through the hole he had made in the wall between the bathroom and her bedroom.

Many years later when Camellia was a married woman and had moved to another city, she noticed a strange phenomenon. The small area rug in her bedroom was never in the same place as she had left it. When she mentioned that to her husband, whom I'll call Bill, he didn't believe her. One day Bill vacuumed the bedroom. He set the rug in a certain place. Upon returning to the room soon afterward, it was in a different place. From then on, he believed Camellia's observation.

One evening awhile later, Bill worked the night shift and Camellia invited her friend, whom I'll call Evaline, to spend the evening socializing. Though Evaline had wanted Camellia to come to her place, Camellia had a strong sense that she should stay at home.

Throughout the evening, Camellia and Evaline talked, their hearts full of praise and gratitude to God for how he had worked in their lives to free them from their particular burdens – Camellia from the sexual abuse she had been subjected to and Evaline from her grief due to her husband's death.

As Evaline prepared to leave, the two women heard a crash. Camellia dashed upstairs to see what had caused it. To her amazement, the mirror on her dresser had been flung out from the wooden ridge that held it firmly in place. Upon closer inspection, Camellia noticed that all the glass had landed on the small area rug – the same one which had inexplicably been repeatedly moved. Not a shard of glass was left in the wooden ridge. Nor had any glass fallen on the dresser top or floor.

Camellia left everything in the room as she had found it until Bill returned home and could see what had happened.

When I asked Camellia how she would explain this incredible event, she attributed it to the fact that at that point in her life Satan, whom she knew was always trying to destroy her, gave up in frustration as Camellia and Evaline's praises to God filled the evening hours.

The resurrection rhythm – displayed in God's power over Satan – pulsed through Camellia's life that evening, and still does.

On a spring day in 1997 I met my Christian neighbor, Jacob, in front of a bus stop on a busy street as we were both out walking. When I inquired how he was, he told me about his recent heart attack and that his grandson was in the hospital. Jacob felt

the weight of the world on his shoulders.

I was also struggling with discouragement and had asked the Lord to encourage me in my faith. While we talked, a woman sat down on the bus stop bench. Trying to console Jacob, I said, "All we can do is pray and trust God to care for us."

The woman got up from the bench. I thought she did so because the bus was coming. Instead she came to me, took hold of my arm, and said, "That's good advice you gave him."

When I asked if she was a Christian, she replied that she was. The three of us talked briefly until her bus arrived.

Before climbing on the bus, she waved and said, "See you in heaven!"

I never saw the woman again.

That encounter reminded me of Jesus' words, "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matt. 18:20). As I went on my way, I had a new bounce in my step – evidence of Easter's resurrection rhythm.

The cadence of that first Easter has never stopped pulsating and pounding, proclaiming the victorious resurrection rhythm in believers' lives wherever God displays his power through caring for his children, through answering prayers in his time and in his way, through defeating Satan, and through making his presence known wherever and however believers gather in his name.

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Commentary

Called to be peacemakers (Synodical report on war and peace)

Harry der Nederlanden

Some have asked why didn't we have this report three years ago, that is, before the U.S. led invasion of Iraq. But in view of such recent events as the sabre-rattling in the face of Iran's nuclear program, Canada's expansion of its peacemaking mission in Afghanistan, and the expansion of the Darfur genocide into Chad, the discussion of the Christian citizen's responsibilities over toward peace and war is no less relevant today than it was three years ago.

Although the Report by the Committee to Study War and Peace was mandated by the CRC Synod of 2003, it has a longer history. One of the Appendices attached to the report is a 2003 Report by an ad hoc committee that is the outcome of considerable discussion and work done by peace activists in the CRC who considered earlier statements on war and peace issued by the CRC inadequate.

There is much that is worthwhile in the Report – both in this one and in the previous one bundled with it – but summarizing it proved quite difficult. Already from the "Prologue" it becomes obvious that this is the work of a committee, for it reads like something of a shake-n-bake of statements round the theme. But the committee was given a very broad mandate, so the Report that resulted is a bit of a shotgun approach to the theme of war and peace. Read as such, it's a help for those who wish to deepen themselves in the issues. Whether it serves the church well as a synodical statement is another matter.

Synod 2003 asked the committee to look at the just war theory the CRC has generally relied on, taking into consideration a changed international environment; at the use of preventive (as opposed to preemptive) military force; the use of nuclear weapons; and, on a more general level, the theology of peacemaking and peacekeeping.

The introductory section reminds us that government was not just instituted for negative reasons, that is, to use force to punish and to wage war, but that it also has positive purposes. It is called to govern for the common good; force is but one tool to that end, and it must be a tool of last resort.

The failure of previous synods

To know when force or war is justified, we must understand the broader role of government – and the even broader role of members of the church of Christ to be peacemakers. Previous CRC Synods have failed us in

this respect:

"They have not discussed the role of the church as the bearer of Christ's peace and as witness to the biblical vision of a new earth in which wars will cease.

"Our church has not addressed adequately the responsibility of citizens and governments to set our own nations and the international community to a path that maintains just government, prevents war, and builds lasting peace." (8)

That's quite a charge. Does it stand up to scrutiny? That depends largely on the content one gives to peacemaking, that is, what one expects from the institutional church. Sometimes the report uses peacemaking in the broadest possible sense, that is, as applied to all that is done by the power and in the name of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. In this sense, whatever we do as citizens of his Kingdom, whether on the level of personal piety, family, work, charity, evangelism, music or art, is part of the peace of Christ's work of reconciliation. Faith, love and hope engender peace and visions of a new earth and a new order.

Admittedly, the CRC doesn't measure up to the high demands of the gospel. But is the CRC Synod guilty of some sort of lingering blindness and muteness to a broader vision of our Kingdom callings?

What about in the narrower sense – in terms of addressing our responsibilities as citizens? Here, it all depends on how much direction the institutional church ought to give in this area. Is that duty discharged by voting as citizens of a democracy? Is it fulfilled by being actively involved in political organizations? Or ought we also to be active in other kinds of political organizations, in non-governmental organizations that function as independent bases of action and of propagandizing, lobbying, demonstrating, and so on? Or should the churches themselves become such bases for political action?

How we answer the question whether CRC Synods have failed us depends to a large extent how we answer these questions.

The church as bearer of shalom

The church is the bearer of shalom (peace), says the Report; shalom is both God's purpose and our calling. It is not just the absence of war but "includes justice, salvation, wholeness, integrity and health. Shalom is human beings at peace in right relationships: with God, with self, with others and with nature."

From this comprehensive, multi-dimensional vision of shalom, the Report moves quickly to discuss the "particular responsibility" of government. While conceding that governments must at times make use of force so that society can flourish, "public peace and order cannot be established primarily by the use of force."

So when the government redistributes wealth, provides for education and health care and protects our various freedoms, it is also peacemaking. In other words, it is fair to conclude that everything, absolutely everything that we do responsibly as the people of God and that the government does when it does its duty falls within the scope of peacemaking. Since it applies to everything we do in the Kingdom, it is hardly surprising that peacemaking also applies to our duties as citizens and to our involvement in other organizations.

The Christian Labour Association is also a peacemaking organization as is the board of our local children's soccer association. In short, it names not a structural difference but a directional one. And that difference can be named with other words as well. We are all love-makers too, for, as Pope Benedict reminded us, God is love. And we are all light-kindlers, freedom-fighters, life-savers and new-

creators. Each of these core terms can be unpacked in a holistic, universalizing way, putting the church at the center of a pluriform, multi-dimensional power that flows out from the Spirit into every realm of life.

Does the church, as the worshipping body, as one institution among others, continue to direct, define and monitor all these different areas of activity? What is its continuing responsibility to these different areas of life?

If the church must continue to serve as a base for defining the duties of Christian citizenship and government in detail and even as a base for political action to influence the platforms of political parties and the policies of governments, what about its responsibility over toward the media and the arts? In an age when the media have such a pervasive influence, shouldn't we be giving actors, artists, musicians and novelists a bit more guidance. We have been even more remiss in our synodical statements with respect to our calling to be re-creators, artistically envisioning the possibilities of the new heaven and the new earth percolating in the present.

An adequate paradigm?

The report points to new knowledge and expertise and new organizations and think-tanks that have arisen to provide new opportunities for peacemaking, and it sketches some of the costs of war in contrast to peacemaking.

It surveys the statements issued by various synods and the contexts in which they were made. Then it describes, in less than three pages, what it calls the current environment, focusing on changes: greater global interdependence, an international emphasis on human rights, the gap in wealth between north and south, the role of international bodies, the emergence of the U.S. as the only superpower, and more.

In view of this different situation, the committee asks whether the just war model is still an "adequate paradigm" for Christians today. Although it confesses that committee members were divided on this issue, it lists three ways in which that model is still useful. However, the model doesn't help much in some situations: 1) in cases of civil conflict where it is difficult to identify a center of legitimate authority; 2) in the increasing destructiveness of war where it is hard to sort out combatants and non-combatants; 3) and in the face of "unprecedented advances in peacemaking." (I don't understand how this last one makes just war theory less useful.)

In the second-last part, the committee at last sinks its teeth into the beef – the security strategies of the U.S. and Canada. The latter goes down rather easily, but the U.S. policies, one gets the impression, is the bone they were after. From the 2003 report attached as an appendix, this Report picks up the distinction between preemptive and preventive wars. To attack an adversary to prevent him from becoming strong enough to pose a threat, the committee notes, is contrary to the just war standard that war be used only as a last resort. And it goes on to warn that over-reliance on military power for security is contrary to Scripture. (True, but over-reliance on education or social engineering or development as the way to true peace is no less contrary to Scripture.)

The remaining 35 pages of appendices include, besides the 2003 report based on meeting held by a number of CRC peace activists, an interesting report by Peter Vander Meulen of the Office of Social Justice and Hunger Action on the "peace-building efforts" of the CRWRC in many different countries. (Question: doesn't the work of missionaries count as peacemaking?) Vander Meulen's office also supplied stories and statistics on the terrible costs of war. What status these pages of appendices have in relation to the main Report I don't know, but perhaps it doesn't matter.

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Letters

Interpreting the Report's purpose

If the overriding purpose of the Report is simply to get people to reflect more deeply on war and peace issues in our churches, keeping in mind certain distinctions and themes sketched out in this brief report, then I think it has done that as well as can be done in the scope of three dozen pages. The members of the committee are certainly much more qualified to address these issues than I, and my commentary only seeks to clarify some things that could be sharpened up a bit more.

At times, it leaves the impression that the churches and the denomination needs to set up a whole other layer of bureaucracy and organization to address the political arena and the government. I'm not sure that it intends to do that, for it points to numerous venues outside the church where Christians can become involved in peacemaking, not just in terms of anti-war activism but in other ways too – in combating poverty and in prison ministries, etc.

If the Report is interpreted too much in terms of anti-war efforts directed against the government, it may give rise to the impression that the church itself should function as a pressure or lobby group. That would be unfortunate, for it would draw the church and Synod into the polarized atmosphere of the "culture war" that has split the country into so-called Red and Blue states.

It would also tempt CRC people to attempt to do politics from inside the wall of the church instead of becoming engaged in political organizations designed for that

purpose.

The mainline churches in the U.S. have evolved a holier-than-thou shadow government that is constantly peeking over the shoulders of lawmakers and administrators vetting and vetoing every policy and every action. So there's a layer of clerics and experts in these denominations that presumes to speak on behalf of the members, and assemblies end up discussing political issues as much as theological ones – in fact, the latter are more and more pushed into the background. (Incidentally, all these churches have been losing members at an alarming rate.)

It's right that the just war model be subject to criticism. It is hardly gospel, and when it came to judging the Iraq war, just war theorists lined up both for and against. One of its guidelines, for example, requires us to weigh ahead of time whether the war will in the end do more harm than good – a notoriously difficult judgment to make. Who can weigh the value of the life of a father, mother, child? That guideline alone is enough to make just war theory itself a doorway to pacifism.

But then we recall such horrific events as the ethnic cleansing launched in Kosovo and among the Kurds, and the Rwandan genocide that Colonel D'Allaire said could have been prevented by a timely military intervention, and the genocide in slow-motion that is now happening in Darfur while the U.N. talks and talks and talks.

Can a CRC Synod make all such issues so fundamentally

clear that our members will agree that it should address the government prophetically and biblically on behalf of us all – and in the name of God?

No, say Bolt and Antonides from one side, and no says Bert den Boggende from another. While Bolt believes the Report will make us swerve too far in the Anabaptist direction, Den Boggende thinks it doesn't pay enough attention to that tradition. I believe the Report need do neither: it simply encourage the Bolts and Den Boggendes to mobilize others to become involved in these important issues as people called by God to be peacemakers.

To read Bolt's & Den Boggende's essay go to www.christiancourier.com and click on feature articles.

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"Thank you Harry and staff."

Dan Vriend

Joesse responds to Bolt

Just read the Bolt piece in which he aligns himself with Lee Harris. Lee Harris is one of the apologists for a belief in American moral superiority which provides it with license nay obligation to establish a new agenda of world dominance, unfettered by the old rules governing civil human intercourse.

Is it not enough that we should bear the political military establishment declaring perpetual war against a vaguely defined enemy, and that we should sacrifice our young men to such ill-defined and increasingly futile foreign policy? Must we who embrace religion also witness our theologians and seminarians providing the theological framework for this ill-fated American "missiology"?

We are asked by Bolt to embrace a theology of the "enemy". What is this if not a call to normative hatred? And where exactly is that supposed to lead? Bolt quotes Harris with approval: "We have no choice but to kill them first". Sounds a lot like the "Bush doctrine" of preventive war.

Surely this cannot be where our religions lead us! Must we suffer a constant tearing of the flesh? Is this the message of the Prince of Peace?

A cursory glance at the world's spiritual leadership will make you wince. On the one hand we amaze at the Imam's deliberate incitement to mayhem. On the other we have our own theological establishment so firmly embedded in the American way that they, along with their media cousins, are willing to lend service as requested.

Then again, why should we be surprised? With a few notable exceptions, religious establishments have historically answered Caesar's call, especially in times of war.

But who then, will answer despair? Who will calm the troubled waters? Who will quiet the trembling heart? Is there no balm in Gilead?

Jim Joesse



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Opinion

All his enemies and mine (III)

After 9/11 – a fantastic enemy

John Bolt

In the previous two articles of this series I argued that we face a civilizational crisis in the West because we have forgotten what it means to have an enemy. Taking my inspiration from Lee Harris's provocative book, *Civilization and its Enemies: The Next Stage of History* (Free Press, 2004), I noted that our enemy defines us whether we want him to or not, that he chooses to be our enemy because of who we are, and that we cannot do anything to make him our friend; he must decide not to be our enemy (I, CC March 20). In addition, it is clear after 9/11 that our enemy is ruthless, he does not play by the rules of the civilized world

and its internationally agreed-upon rules. Terror is his chief strategy and he acts in a calculated way not to achieve a military or political objective first of all, but precisely to terrorize. He is ruthless (II, CC April 3).

In this article I want to explore the further dimension of our enemy's ruthlessness by calling attention to the fantasy world in which our enemy lives. The goal is to try "understand" what makes a terrorist tick (if one may be permitted a terrible pun). Again, I am indebted to Harris for most of this.

How do we "explain" 9/11? Why did the terrorists fly planes into the World Trade Center? Well, in the light of what I have written in the previous two articles, the

answer is quite simple. Beginning with the notion of an enemy – enemies are those who hate us – and recognizing that those who hate us seek to do nothing else but to destroy us, we know the answer. Our enemies kamikazied the Twin Towers because they hate us. They are our enemy.

This is not an answer that pleases most of us; many would even consider it immoral as well as simplistic. I recall numerous friendly debates with friends and colleagues right after 9/11 about the "root causes" of such acts of terrorism. We want explanations; there must some understandable reason. However explained, the assumption here is that some political objective must have been

intended. Perhaps it was to call attention to the plight of the Palestinians; to protest American support of Israel; to cry out on behalf of the world's poor by destroying a grand symbol of world capitalism, etcetera. Again, the thinking here is that some purpose to change the world must have been the goal. If only we could discover what it is, we could work harder to help achieve it and then a 9/11 type of event would not happen again.

Harris categorically rejects all such efforts to find explanations and root causes for acts such as 9/11:

Ruthlessness has no root causes. It is not engendered by poverty and illiteracy or a lack

No commercialism in Sweden's Archipelagos

– just unspoilt nature and thousands of rocky treed islands

Maynard van der Galien

What are some of the most scenic places you've been to? Switzerland has breathtaking scenery. Traveling down the Rhine River in Germany is an experience I will never forget. The Rhine snakes through hilly and mountainous country. Perched on top of steep mountains, or on the side of the mountains, are many huge ancient castles.

Austria is a beautiful scenic country. Norway is a little like Switzerland. Denmark reminds me of Holland – both countries have canals and you see many bicycles.

Standing inside huge magnificent Russian Orthodox Churches in the city of St. Petersburg in Russia is something I'll cherish forever.

Sweden, like Finland, is a country of uncountable lakes – over 100,000 lakes, which add to the beauty of the varied Swedish landscape.

My sister, Willie, and I toured the capital cities and traveled the countryside of most of the northern European countries in September of 2003. We wanted to do something special to commemorate our 50th year in Canada. We emigrated from Holland in September of 1953. Willie was 18. I was four years old.

Sweden's Archipelagos are world famous. The west coast is unique by its naked rocks and islands. The soil was washed away during the Ice Age, thousands of years ago, and left smooth, bare islands.

The Stockholm Archipelago on the east coast is known for its many islands. We traveled through that area and

saw some of the 25,000 islands, islets and skerries (small rocky islands) that stretch from Stockholm all the way east into the Baltic Sea.

If you love unspoilt nature, then go sightseeing in the Archipelagos. I'm told it would take years to see all the islands.

Our Scandinavian tour itinerary said we would be cruising the Swedish Archipelagos. I had no idea what to expect. The morning I thought we would be approaching the harbor in Stockholm, I woke up just as it was getting light and looked out of our cabin window and saw a rocky island right next to the ship – maybe 150 feet away. I couldn't believe my eyes. Small islands were everywhere. The huge cruise ship was manoeuvring its way between the islands.

I quickly got dressed and went out to the walking deck – the deck our cabin was on. For over an hour I watched as we cruised slowly by the rocky islands. Occasionally I saw an island with a wooden summer residence. Tied to a dock was either a large motorboat or a sailboat. Everywhere you looked you saw the unspoilt rugged wilderness, the beautiful nature, wildlife, fjords, narrow channels and straits, the pine and birch forests, wild flowers, sandy and stony beaches, and thousands of smooth rock-faced islands usually crammed full of trees.

I think what made it such an incredible sight is that the islands and islets are shiny, rounded rock islands. They are all small and rounded. They were formed by the ice cap, which covered the whole of Scandinavia before retreating 10,000 years ago.

Only 150 of the islands are inhabited year round. The musical group ABBA wrote many of their songs on one of those secluded rocky islands. I suppose that's because there were no distractions, except for nature all around them.

The Archipelago is important for breeding seabirds including gulls, Arctic Skua, Caspian Tern, Razorbill and Black and Common Guillemots.

You can't help wonder why so few people know about the Archipelago outside Sweden. I read that the Archipelago is as yet undiscovered by the foreign tourist.



In the late nineteenth century, the Archipelago was inhabited by remote farming, fishing, and hunting communities. August Strindberg (famous Swedish writer 1849-1912) and a group of writers and artists were among the first to rent cottages from the islanders during the summer. The writer described his first impressions as "rough granite islets, with pine forests, stormy bay waters.... Not the Alps of Switzerland, nor the olive hills of the Mediterranean, or the chalk cliffs of Normandy could force aside this rival."

The evening we left Stockholm for Denmark, I skipped a dress-up dinner the travel company had arranged for us because I did not want to miss the sight of us, and three other large cruise ships, winding its way through the maze of islands. I stayed on the front and side decks of the ship with binoculars slung around my neck and camera in hand. It was an awesome sight to see the huge passenger ships, maybe a half kilometer apart, following each other around the many islands – where the water was deep and free of rocks. Two ships were in front of us and one was behind us.

It was a sight I'll never forget.

I'll probably be thinking about Sweden and the islands when I spent part of the Easter weekend at our cottage on beautiful Colton Lake – just a few miles from home. I love being near water.

Have a Blessed Easter!

Maynard van der Galien owns and operates The Old Towne Hall Restaurant and Tea Room in downtown Renfrew, Ont.



Stewardship

All his enemies and mine *continued*

of education or the Muslim religion or the concept of jihad. It is a technique for gaining power. (p. 109)

The only "explanation" then is the evil resident in the human heart that leads some to form ruthless gangs with a will to dominate and enslave or destroy. We make an enormous error, according to Harris, when we "mistake ruthlessness for desperation." We then fall into the fantasy world of the ruthless themselves. (p. 109)

Fantasy world – that's where our current enemy lives says Harris. The best way to understand 9/11 is to think of it as *theater*; as a dramatic "enactment of a fantasy" (p. 4), as a way of furthering a "fantasy ideology." People who pursue individual fantasies do not treat others as subjects with wills and minds of their own but as props and pawns for their own self-conceived roles. While such individual fantasies are usually limited by others who do not share the fantasy – to be an effective Napoleon Bonaparte reincarnate others have to call you "Emperor" – "what happens when it is not an individual who is caught up in his fantasy world but an entire group – a sect, or a people, or even a nation?" (p. 7)

As examples of group fantasies Harris points to medieval millenarian movements along with nineteenth-century American utopian and adventist groups (e.g. the Millerites), and we could add to that the anxious Y2K apocalyptic people who began hoarding food and water and cleaned out their ATM accounts just before the great worldwide computer meltdown at midnight on January 1, 2000.

In the modern world fantasy ideologies turned political with the *group fantasies* of the French Revolution, the Communist International, German Nazism, and Italian Fascism. Such collective fantasies need *theater*, need public demonstrations to prove to true believers that their faith is grounded; that it is more than a fantasy. Harris describes the "reason" behind 9/11 this way:

The terror attack of 9/11 was not designed to make us alter our policy but was crafted for its effect on the terrorists themselves, on those who share the same fantasy ideology. It was a spectacular piece of theater ... with the targets ... chosen ... not for their military value – in contrast, for example, to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor – but entirely because they stood as symbols of American power universally recognized in the Arab street.

As Harris sees it, the attacks were not even in the first place intended "to create terror in the minds of the American people but to prove to the Arabs that Islamic purity, as interpreted by radical Islam, could triumph over the West." (p. 12)

This has enormous implications for our response to world-wide terrorism. "We are fighting an enemy who has no strategic purpose in anything he does, whose actions have significance only in terms of his own fantasy ideology." (p. 17)

How do we deter such an enemy? Can we? DO we have any choice but the stark twofold option: convert them or kill them? In my next article I want to address this tough question by considering the way in which we as Christians are compelled to think in terms of a twofold enemy and a twofold war

Major Purchases – 2

For many of us the next most expensive item after the purchase of a home is the purchase of a vehicle. For some it may be more than one vehicle – especially when public transit is not an option.

Many articles have been written about the Western love affair with the automobile. Having lived for many years in Asia, I would dare say it is a worldwide love affair. Being able to go somewhere in a private car, especially if it is a car that has status – like a Benz or even a Rolls – tells everyone that you've made it.

Compromised objectivity

For many, a car or truck is more than just a mode of transportation – it is a statement. Consider the young male personalizing his little Civic rocket or his Chevy truck with special paint, ground effects and a multi-watt, multi-dollar sound system that says 'I'm here!' Consider the Wall-Street success story driving the latest Beemer, the macho off-roader in his Hummer, Miss Good Looking in her Cabriolet convertible, or the retiree in his Lexus SUV – they're all saying "I've made it!" There is evidence that each gender and each age group participates in this love affair with cars/trucks. Similarly, so does a Philippino driver who decorates his Jeepney and an Indian truck driver his truck.

Our passion or love affair with cars makes us much less objective about transportation. We may even choose to deliberately ignore what a car really costs us, because we just don't want to give up our vehicles. We are very quick to justify a vehicle purchase for convenience, or we'll choose a model that catches our fancy but isn't necessarily a good choice from a practical or stewardly perspective.

Motorized vehicles cost us more than just the purchase price or the fuel to run them. Consider the investment in roads alone, the expenditures for oil extraction, mining and other related manufacturing industries that pollute our air and water. Drive by the Hamilton steel industries sometime and you'll get the picture. The related health costs to our society go beyond the costs associated with vehicular accidents to include the hazard to our health from pollution and the increasing girth of our citizens due to the lack of physical exercise, largely contributed by the convenience of our vehicles.

Instead of focusing on status, a good steward needs to be practical when it comes to the decision to purchase a vehicle. What is value in a vehicle? It varies based on your assessment of what you need:

- Flexibility: the ability to haul materials as well as people.
- Fuel economy: with the increasing cost of fuel, we are forced to be more stewardly. But cost aside, shouldn't Christians exemplify a higher level of stewardship on principle alone?
- Reliability: no one wants to be stranded on the side of the road, especially in our cold winters. The cost of repairs is often too quickly used to justify the purchase of a new car. Never underestimate the importance of timely maintenance.

• Performance: we're in a hurry and so we want to move fast. Vehicle performance is often skewed for fast driving and handling – not so much for safer driving or better economy.

• Durability and trade-in value: manufacturers often manipulate price and warranties to attract new buyers.

• Cost of insurance: a special problem for young men.

Can you do without?

Before purchasing a car, it is important

to assess what your alternatives are. Is there a public transit alternative? Is there a car pool you can join so that you might be able to make do with one car? For instance, can you manage without a car or a second car by using public transit in town and occasionally renting a car only when you need it?

What do you really need most of the time? Maybe it is nice to have a pickup truck or a crew-cab pickup or a large SUV. But how much of the time will you just use it to commute? A tow behind trailer for the occasional run to the dump or to pick up supplies, or even a rental truck may be more stewardly. The extra fuel consumption of a truck over a car, alone, makes whatever you occasionally haul very expensive.

New or used?

Consider used first. The depreciation on a new car is awful. If you are not technically inclined, seek out a friend who can help you make a good choice. Do your research. You increase your success in a used car purchase if it is from a first owner or someone you know who is good at maintaining a car and has a good reason for selling.

However, the less you understand about a vehicle the more you need a reliable model and brand. You are better off with a new car if you can afford it. If you do buy a new vehicle, consider keeping it 10 years or more, even if you drive a lot (over 40,000/year). It does mean you have to stay on top of the maintenance. If you need to have two cars, one can be much older and of less value so that you might be able to save on collision insurance for it.

Lease or buy

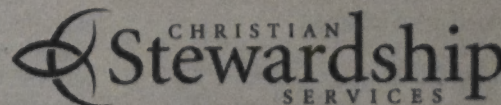
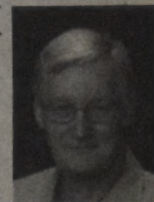
Leasing is the same as renting. It may have an advantage for business people who travel a lot. For the most part, you can do better with an outright purchase, especially if you maintain your vehicles well and buy them used.

Stewardly tip: Do Research. There are many sources of solid information (private and government) that rate the quality, reliability, fuel consumption and safety of vehicles manufactured today. There are substantial differences so buyers beware! Independent consumer groups that are objective and report on how a vehicle performs in the hands of consumers like you and me are preferred over manufacturer literature and promotion.

Readers: Share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestion and your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.

Next issue: Talents – 1

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario
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Church

The Ottawa Manifesto regarding poverty and homelessness

Over 300 advocates for the homeless, including representatives of the CRC, met in Ottawa on the weekend prior to the opening of parliament to discuss strategies for dealing with homelessness in Canada. The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada Roundtable on Poverty and Homelessness warned that the number of homeless people in Canada has reached crisis levels.

The Manifesto produced by the EFC sponsored meeting was printed in the Ottawa Citizen, and we reprint it here in its entirety.

We, the members of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada's Roundtable on Poverty and Homelessness, and other signatories, are representative of the many Canadian people of Christian faith who believe that the care of poor and vulnerable people of all ages is a central tenet of our own faith, of good government, and of responsible, compassionate citizenship. We have already committed significant personal and organizational resources to this purpose. We have witnessed the rise of homelessness as a crisis of disturbing proportions, and of societal, systemic and individual complexity. The time has come to add to material action a clear, creative and challenging public voice.

We believe that Jesus Christ was and is the unique Son of God, and that he lived, died and was resurrected for our salvation. We believe that the Bible is, in its entirety, God-breathed, and that His voice may be heard clearly throughout. And we are convinced that the teaching and example of Jesus, together with the repeated testimony of the Bible, reveal that God specifically values those who are poor and rejected as having been made in His image, and, therefore, as inherently precious to Him. We are convinced of the fundamental dignity and worth of each and every human being, without qualification.

We all need homes, not just housing

A home is more than just four walls and a roof. It's a whole life situation that means being welcomed into a safe, secure and dignified place to live; healthy, nurturing relationships; the opportunity for education, meaningful work for reasonable pay; and to worship, dream and play in vibrant community. Housing initiatives need to take these values into account, and aim at creating far more than "affordable" space.

We are more alike than different

Drastically different life circumstances can create the illusion that we are inherently different beings, especially when those external differences are ones that may frighten or repulse us – such as homelessness. These perceived differences allow us to distance ourselves still farther, until we can easily justify our nonengagement with people who are homeless. Yet the closer we get to people, even those whose experiences, circumstances and proclivities seem completely foreign to us, the more essentially similar we find ourselves to be. People who are homeless have the same needs and longings we all share.

Compassion demands action

Compassion is more than a feeling. Genuinely caring about people motivates us to take action. We must, therefore, apply ourselves to learn why people become homeless or are trapped in poverty, engage in social and political advocacy, make a point of getting to know people who may live outside our own "comfort zones", and seek to share our time, abilities and material resources. All of these energies are directed at effecting material change – such as dignified housing, meaningful work, or access to health care or education – in the lives of the people for whom we have compassion.

Grace and mercy are for all of us

Choosing to help only those who "deserve" help and leaving behind those whose behaviours we may disapprove of is prejudicial and not biblical. The grace and mercy of God, upon which we all rely, are, by definition, only for people who are undeserving and/or guilty. Christians, knowing themselves to be by nature undeserving, ought to be able to identify with those who appear to be homeless or poor because of their own behaviours. "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

Ignoring poverty impoverishes all of us

Abandoning people to poverty increases health problems and welfare rolls, and sometimes drives people to crime – all major burdens for governments, and therefore, tax payers. The generational entrenchment of poverty diminishes hope (the capacity to dream) and the sense of personal value in the individual. Children, the unrealized potential of our nation, when they are born into poverty, start life so far behind others that they may never be able to catch up. The whole of society is enriched when the creative gifts of the poor are supported by governmental and social systems that affirm the value of what they have to offer. When people are shut out because of their poverty, poverty itself "snowballs", at once increasing our societal burden and diminishing our societal capacity. Homelessness in Canada is a clear and concrete manifestation of this truth.

Justice and mercy define good government

Believing that our progress is measured by our standard of care for the least privileged among us, we expect good government to formulate policy that not only works toward a level playing field, but offers "second chances" to people who have failed or done wrong. We believe that justice ought to be primarily restorative rather than punitive. We recognize that both social policies and budgets are declarations of a government's moral intent. We will offer whatever support we can to government initiatives that are just and merciful, and will continue to use every means at our disposal to press governments at every level until such policies are made a priority. We believe that homelessness will be a priority for policy makers concerned with justice and mercy.

Poverty belongs at the centre

The Bible teaches clearly and consistently throughout, that care of people who are poor, oppressed or marginalized is intrinsic to both the announcing of the gospel of personal salvation, and the purpose of government. Throughout western history, when governments and the church have put care of such people at the centre of their agendas, both have flourished. For perhaps 150 years, the general political and religious trends in the western world have been aimed at reducing poverty – with a significant level of success.

In recent years, however, these positive trends have diminished and further marginalized people who are poor, sometimes to the point of criminalizing certain aspects of poverty. We believe that, if this trend continues, it will ultimately be disastrous for our country and our churches. The church in Canada has a responsibility to provide moral leadership by making a priority of caring for people who are poor, and particularly people who are homeless, in its own budgets and activities.

Government responsibility does not excuse church apathy

While various levels of government clearly have a responsibility to address these matters, the church must not succumb to a theological dichotomy whereby we construe



the church's responsibilities to concern only the spiritual, and the government's only the physical. As communities of faith, we have different capacities than governments or social service organizations. We must be ready to provide creative leadership in some circumstances, and partnership or humble servanthood in others, in order to create realistic, dignified and sustainable options for people who are homeless.

Christian groups make good partners for government initiatives

Christian groups have for many years been the largest nongovernment service provider to the poor and homeless in North America. In fact, many social services now funded and directed by government were begun by such groups. Since Christian teaching and practice encourages the development of functioning communities, a high level of volunteer participation, and the donation of money and other resources, we can often achieve more with less, adding value and offering a wealth of experience and healthy community context to government resources. Already existing Christian communities offer a holistic context for the development or implementation of services and programs that government is not equipped to create on its own. We encourage Christian groups to support and partner, wherever possible, with government initiatives aimed at the substantial reduction of homelessness, poverty, and their root causes.

Therefore, to our brothers and sisters who struggle with poverty and homelessness, we commit to...

LEARN all we can about the systemic, sociological, economic, cultural and spiritual deficits that have left them in this state. We will listen carefully to them, for they are our greatest teachers. We will seek out the knowledge others have acquired, and teach what we ourselves have learned to those who want to care more effectively for people who are poor or homeless;

ACT with diligence and integrity to create with them healthy, nurturing relationships, and safe, secure, dignified homes;

SPEAK on their behalf when their own voices are not heard, and support them in speaking for themselves, to the end that Canadian churches, governments, media and businesses would make the substantial reduction of homelessness, poverty and their root causes a high priority; and

COOPERATE with others committed to these baseline objectives, respecting differences of approach and philosophy.

Before God, we make these commitments in the places where we work and serve, in our communities of faith, and in our personal lives.

If you want to add your signature, go to: <http://www.streetlevel.ca/manifesto/>

Church

New Swedish archbishop warns male priests to work with women

Lars Grip

Stockholm, Sweden (ENI) – Anders Wejryd, bishop of Vaxjo in southern Sweden who has been elected the next archbishop of the (Lutheran) Church of Sweden, has told male priests they must work with ordained women or face the nation's anti-discrimination laws.

Speaking to the *Dagens Nyheter* newspaper after his appointment was announced, Wejryd said he would not hesitate to report male priests who refused to work with female priests to the police. "We have a law against discrimination and in these cases it is a question of particularly insulting treatment," Wejryd noted.

The Swedish church accepted the ordination of women as priests in 1958, the first woman being ordained in 1960. Opponents of the ordination of women have claimed in recent years they have

been marginalized within the church, the largest in Sweden.

Wejryd also said he also hoped for long-term acceptance among priests for the blessing of homosexual couples in the church. At the end of December, the Russian Orthodox Church announced it was suspending its contacts with the Church of Sweden after a vote by the Swedish church to introduce a service of blessing for same-sex civil partnerships.

"It's not the task of the Church to be the guardian of 'good morals', instead our task is to be the guardian of mercy," Wejryd said in a separate interview with *Kyrkans Tidning*, the Church of Sweden's newspaper. "We must be proud about our message."

Wejryd is a member of the main governing body of the Lutheran World Federation, and chairs the federation's project committee on mission and development.

Pentecostal, less traditional Protestant churches grow in US

Chris Herlinger

New York (ENI) – Pentecostal and so-called non-mainline Protestant churches show continuing growth in the United States, while mainstream churches continue to lose membership, according to the latest annual figures on US church membership.

The largest Protestant denomination in the United States, the Southern Baptist Convention, showed a decline in membership, while the Roman Catholic Church, the largest single church body, showed a slight increase. The US National Council of Churches this week released the figures in the 2006 Yearbook of American and Canadian churches.

The yearbook indicated that, among the 25 largest churches in the United States, those showing the largest increases in membership were the Assemblies of God, a Pentecostal denomination, increasing 1.81 per cent to 2.78 million; the Church of Jesus Christ of

Latter Day Saints, increasing 1.74 per cent to 5.99 million; and the Catholic Church, increasing 0.83 per cent to 67.82 million.

The Southern Baptist Convention, with 16.27 million members, reported a decrease of 1.05 per cent.

Only three Protestant churches often referred to as mainline – the United Methodist Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Presbyterian Church (USA) – are listed among the 10 largest churches in the United States, according to yearbook statistics.

The United Methodist Church ranked third of US churches with a membership of 8.19 million, a decrease of 0.79 per cent; the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America ranked seventh with a membership of 4.93 million, a decrease of 1.09 per cent; and the Presbyterian Church (USA), ranked ninth with a membership of 3.19 million, a decrease of 1.60 per cent.

Millions of Christians in the U.S. never attend church, says Barna

(Ventura, CA) – A new report based on its annual tracking survey by The Barna Group reveals that one-third of the adult population (34 per cent) has not attended any type of church service or activity, other than a special event such as a funeral or wedding, during the past six months.

Citing past research that discovered most unchurched adults were formerly church members, the new study indicates that six out of ten unchurched people (62 per cent) consider themselves to be Christian, four per cent say they are Jewish, four per cent are associated with an eastern religion, and 24 per cent say they are atheist. Denominationally, the largest share of unchurched adults is made up of lapsed Catholics: almost three out of every ten unchurched people (29 per cent) associate with Catholicism. One out of every five (18 per cent) say they are Baptist.

In the eyes of these individuals, absence from church life does not indicate a lack of

commitment to the Christian faith. Three out of four unchurched adults who consider themselves to be Christian (77 per cent) contend that they are either absolutely or moderately committed to the Christian faith.

Millions of unchurched adults engage in spiritual activity during a typical week. For instance, nearly two-thirds (62 per cent) pray to God, one-fifth (20 per cent) read from the Bible, and five per cent participate in a small group that meets in someone's home for Bible study, prayer or Christian fellowship.

The Barna Group survey noted that one out of every five unchurched adults (21 per cent) calls himself born again, but only four per cent possess a biblical worldview.

George Barna, who directed the study, also pointed out that a minority of unchurched adults has a biblical view of God, while less than one out of five say that involvement in a community of faith is necessary to become a mature and complete person.

Secular groups rally behind harassed India Christians in desert state

Anto Akkara

Jaipur, India, (ENI) – More than 20 secular action groups joined Christians for a silent march in Rajasthan, western India, demanding an end to violence aimed at Christians in the state ruled by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

More than 6,000 people marched four kilometres on March 21 under a blazing sun in the capital Jaipur from the hero's monument to the Rajasthan state legislature.

Police erected barricades near the legislature, and protesters including hundreds of Roman Catholic nuns squatted on the road for nearly three hours listening to speeches by activists and church and political leaders. All lambasted the BJP-led state government, saying it was complicit in the attacks on the Christians.

Rajasthan encompasses the Thar desert, one of the largest in the world, but Christians in the state make up less than 100,000 of its 57 million people.

The protests came after attacks on the Emmanuel Mission International at Kota. These followed the finding of a book for sale at a stall containing derogatory comments on Hinduism. Despite apologies, Hindu groups attacked and blockaded mission centres including 49 schools, orphanages and a hospital. The state government cut the cooking gas supply to an orphanage at Kota with 2000 residents and froze its bank accounts. It arrested mission officials and withdrew their licenses to operate.

Canadian monks and nuns challenge Roman Catholic teaching

Ferdy Baglo

Vancouver, BC (ENI) – A body representing 22,000 Roman Catholic monks, nuns and priests in Canada's religious orders has challenged the teachings of the church on issues including divorce, contraception and homosexuality.

"We regret ... that our Church often gives priority to the reaffirmation of dogma and traditional morals rather than listening to the people's search for meanings," the Canadian Religious Conference (CRC) states in a document sent to the country's bishops in advance of their expected visit to the Vatican later this year.

The document expresses regret for the "legalistic image of the Catholic Church – and of our Canadian Church – its rigidity and its intransigent stands on sexual morals; its lack of openness regarding access to the sacraments for divorced and remarried Catholics; its lack of compassion for them; [and] its unwelcoming attitude toward homosexuals."

It states further misgivings "in terms of ethics and bioethics the holding up of an ideal that leaves little room for advancement and progress; the defence of principles that do not reflect human experience (divorce, contraception, protection against AIDS,

EMI director, Bishop Samuel Thomas was arrested in New Delhi last week by Rajasthan police while he was trying to meet legal officials to seek bail for the charges he expected to be laden on him as the head of the Emmanuel mission.

Protestors called for the immediate release of those arrested for the sale of the controversial book, and 24 secular groups along with Christians, in a joint message, urged the government to take "stern action to stop attacks against the Christian community and other minorities".

The Rev. Z. R. Masih, president of the Jaipur Christian Fellowship, told Ecumenical News International that militant Hindu groups had enjoyed a "free run" in Rajasthan since the attacks on the mission began in mid-February. Masih, a Church of North India pastor, said, "They climbed on top of a church here and desecrated the cross by writing on OM [Hindu holy letters] while police looked on." On a Sunday, two weeks earlier, protesters prevented Christians from entering a church for worship despite a police presence. "It seems the police have been clearly instructed not to protect or help the Christians," Masih noted.

Kavita Srivastava, a Hindu, and secretary of the Rajasthan unit of the People's Union for Civil Liberties, told ENI her organization coordinated the protest march with other action groups. "Christians have been scared of coming out to protest", she said. "What can a tiny community do when it is hunted by powerful forces?"

alleviation of suffering at the end of life)."

The CRC represents more than 200 religious communities and asks the bishops to consider the "ordination of married men, women and elders in the First Nations communities [who lived in Canada before the arrival of Europeans]."

Cardinal Marc Ouellet, the Roman Catholic primate of Canada, said he would take the concerns of the religious conference to the Vatican, reported Montreal's *Gazette*. But he stressed the Canadian church would never separate itself from Catholic teaching.

Publication of the document to the bishops coincided with media reports that Pope Benedict XVI might make his first visit to Canada in 2008 for an international event in Quebec City.

Alain Ambeault, president of CRC, wrote to members: "We have the firm conviction that this message reflects the thinking of the leadership of religious communities in Canada as well as the majority of the religious men and women throughout this country."

∴ Canada's 2001 census found that 12.8 million or 43.2 per cent of the country's people are Catholics.

Synod report

The CRC on war and peace

Harry Antonides

Modern warfare and the role of the American military are two of the most controversial and divisive public issues today. They have divided families and estranged friends. They are having the same impact within the churches. Although this is painting in broad strokes, the major divide among churches is between those who hold to the just-war position versus the "peacemakers."

The Christian Reformed Church in North America has traditionally upheld the just-war position, that is, the belief that the state may, and indeed must in extreme circumstances, use military force to protect its citizens against harm. This church is now re-visiting that issue, and not surprisingly, its members are not of the same mind.

Can wars be just?

In the following I want to focus on the manner in which this duality is evident in the report to the 2006 CRC synod by the Committee to Study War and Peace. This report has been sent to all congregations and classes for review. The origin of this report, explained in the report itself, deserves special attention. The complete 73-page text (including 35 pages of appendices) is available at www.crcna.org, under *resources, synod-related*.

Synod's committee was instructed to study the issue of war and peace and to recommend guidelines and advice for the church by giving special attention to the following: the just war theory; the changed international environment; the use of military force in preemptive and preventive warfare; the continuing proliferation of nuclear weapons; and the underlying theology and principles of peacemaking and peacekeeping.

The report contains an overview of previous synodical statements regarding war, which drew attention to the church members' responsibility "to be peacemakers in this world and to insist that the state fulfill its proper function in the world as an instrument from God to establish order, justice, and peace." (p.8)

In summary, the report found that the historic criteria for justified warfare in view of changes in international relations need to be reevaluated; preemptive and preventive warfare must be distinguished; nuclear weapons should not be considered legitimate

means of warfare; Christians are called to be agents of shalom and "to be actively engaged in the talk of peacemaking within and among nations." (p.4)

The committee observed that the Bush administration's policy paper of 2002, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, contains a number of worthy objectives. But it took issue with President Bush's statement that in some instances the U.S. will act preemptively against outside threats. The committee warned that such a policy would fuel the arms race and lead to a reliance on unilateral military action without regard for just-war considerations.

The report issued some 26 recommendations, including that synod request Calvin College to initiate the creation of a Virtual Institute of Peace; and that the CRC in Canada be encouraged "to participate more actively in policy development and programs for peace building, including participation in Project Ploughshares and other inter-church policy dialogues on peace and war issues."* (p.38)

What about the Sermon on the Mount?

Often this type of synodical report is of scant interest to the members of the church, who leave such matters to the delegates of synod. The result is that there is very little discussion, if any, among the members or even the council members of the congregations about the matters before synod. But this time it may be different because of the initiative of Dr. John Bolt, professor of systematic theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Dr. Bolt has written a public document to stimulate discussion about issues that go to the very heart of what it means to be the Church of Christ in our time. His "War and Peace in the CRC" is a detailed and forthright challenge to the authors and readers of the synodical report. This document is available at the Web site CRConnect.org.

In the remainder of this article I will highlight a few major points in the Bolt document in the hope that it will induce you to read it in its entirety. It will engage you in a fascinating and compelling treatment of some of the most burning issues of our time.

I believe that the central issue

in this discussion is how to understand the Bible, and specifically Jesus's instruction to be peacemakers. Bolt takes the position that a fundamental error of the so-called peace churches is the failure to distinguish between the task of the church and the state. This happens when Jesus commands us to be peacemakers – to love our enemies, to bless those who curse us, to pray for them, and to turn the other cheek – is applied to all situations, including state-to-state relations.

The truth is that such instructions are for the church and all interpersonal relations in the private sphere – though we obviously need not meekly submit to thugs and criminals. As to the task of the state, the Bible is clear that the state has the prerogative, at times even the duty, to use "the power of the sword," that is, military force.

Bolt explains this difference by referring to the work of the Roman Catholic scholar George Weigel, who writes that in the Augustinian tradition of just war the peace that is addressed is neither:

...a matter of the individual's right relation with God, nor is it a matter of seeking a world without conflict. The former is a matter of interior conversion (which by definition has nothing to do with politics), and the latter is impossible in a world forever marked, even after its redemption, by the [mystery of evil]. In the appropriate *political* sense of the term, peace is, rather, ...the order created by just political community and mediated through law.

...This is, admittedly, a humbler sort of peace. It coexists with broken hearts and wounded souls. It is to be built in a world in which swords have not been beaten into plowshares, but remain swords; sheathed, but ready to be unsheathed in the defense of innocents. Its advantage, as Augustine understood, is that it is the form of peace that can be built through the instruments of politics.

Synod's report claims that the contemporary discussions about the legitimate use of military force suffers from a lack of understanding just-war requirements and the Christian calling to be peacemakers.

Bolt responds that it is a matter of course that the U.S. government does not live by the Sermon on the Mount, for it does not seek to establish a theocracy, and it

does not have the responsibility to produce children of God. To frame the discussion as the report does and to use the Scriptures as a "prophetic attack" on the evil of contemporary militarism is confusing and involves an illegitimate use of Scripture, says Bolt. He continues:

Well, then, shouldn't Christians be reconcilers and agents of reconciliation? Of course, in so far as it is up to us (Romans 12:18; also cited by the report). But I doubt that Jesus's blessing on peacemakers was ever intended to be a call to activism on behalf of international peace movements. In fact, I am confident that this is *not* what our Lord meant and I have the longer tradition of the church's understanding backing me here. Why does the report push these texts and ideas to the fore? Because its goal is to get CRC people to become peace activists; peacemakers to use the biblical phrase.... It is this vision with which the committee is preoccupied....

... Okay, one might say. I agree. It is our responsibility as Christians to willingly pay our taxes for defense, to see that America has a strong military that can dissuade bad people from harming us and especially the world's weakest. That is how we must be peacemakers; I agree with you. Well, that is not the vision that the committee has. Not at all. Being a peacemaker essentially comes down to being a critic of the (American) government. How else to explain the heavy use of so-called "prophetic" passages against governing authorities. (pp.4-9)

The report makes a favorable reference to the book by ethicist Glen Stassen, *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices for Abolishing War*, and in that context it complains that governments spend more money on military readiness than on peacemaking. Bolt comments: *Abolish War??? And this is a suggestion from Calvinists??? And since when is military preparedness not an essential part of maintaining the peace? As I noted earlier, this report is disappointing because rather than really developing the just-war tradition and applying it to conditions of our time, it has abandoned it in exchange for the different tradition of the peace churches.*

We can do better

Bolt confirms that he has a

high regard for the historic peace churches and their commitment to radical Christian discipleship and pacifism. But the real problem of the Reformers with the Anabaptist tradition was with the radicals who did not just adopt the Sermon on the Mount for their own life of discipleship but as a plan for national organization and world domination. The report on War and Peace to this year's synod is more in the latter tradition in that "it uses the life of Christian discipleship as a pattern and platform for worldly political activism," Bolt elaborates:

It is not Reformed; it is not in the ballpark of just-war moral reasoning. For that reason, I am doubly disappointed because it is a failed opportunity, one that does not get us out of the pull between the national idolatry that is present in the Christian right and the national self-loathing and hostility that characterizes the secular and Christian left as it is reflected in the peace rhetoric of the mainline churches and ecumenical movement. I would not have been happy had the report used just-war criteria to defend "America is always right because we are God's chosen" viewpoint; I am not happy when it pushes us in the direction of the mainline churches. We can do better, much better; sadly, we didn't.

Another major criticism of Bolt is the report's failure to adequately reckon with the reality of sin and evil in individuals and groups. The authors are enthusiastic about the role international organizations can play, but they ignore the fact that such organizations are virtually helpless over against ruthless and determined destroyers of peace and order.

We should not be naïve about the reality that autocratic regimes readily sign treaties and conventions but have no intention to abide by them.

I suspect that here Bolt gets at the reason for a glaring omission of this synodical report: nowhere does it mention the real source of the current campaign of relentless, daily bombings of innocent people in Iraq. Nor does it refer to the fatwas pronounced by radical Islamists, or to the horrible killings committed in many parts of the world, especially in Israel, in the name of Allah. Why is there total silence in this report about the murderous ideology of Wahhabism that cannot be assuaged by peace-

Review

Grow with the Gwich'in

Curt Gesch

If you want a great book about wildlife and one of Canada's northern peoples, try *Nanh'Kak Geenjit Gwich'in in Gijik*. Published in 1997 in Inuvik, the book has several advantages over many of the books available at your local library.

Popular notions about first nations people would probably lead you to expect sentences like this one by Alfred Semple: "I respect caribou because ... Every year they come back to us ... God created our caribou and they never stray away to a different country. I hope they stay."

Followers of the U.S.A.'s on-again/off-again plans to drill for oil in their Arctic Wildlife Reserve wouldn't be surprised by William Francis's comment: "Where the Americans want to start an oil field, that is caribou calving ground and Old Crow people don't want them there. Caribou go to the coast to calve and the wind from the ocean blows the mosquitoes away."

Some readers might have a harder time with this blunt statement: "God created the vadzaih [caribou] for people to eat." Not currently fashionable in some quarters to say "Bambi is food for Fred. Thank you, Jesus. Amen."

We're more comfortable with succeeding sentences:



"Some Elders stated that if people continue to treat vadzaih the way most do now, one of these days God is not going to let vadzaih come to this country again. God will tell the vadzaih not to come back to the people."

These various sentiments stand together in this remarkable publication. Matter-of-fact descriptions of how to prepare vadzaih head [caribou head] with or without skinning it stand side by side with ethical injunctions about sharing, abjurations to respect wildlife, and totemistic tales about people changing into animals and back again.

As far as I can determine, the book contains no ideology at all, unless one calls a deep yearning for the preservation of a people, a language, and a culture to be an ideology. Gwich'in words are used for all the animals, birds, and fish described in the book in order to encourage Gwich'in children and young people to appreciate and reappropriate the language.

The book does not, however, try to push the readers

around. Information is presented as gleaned from tribal elders, summarized or quoted with no apparent bias. Occasional contradictions are left unharmonized. Honesty is the norm. Occasional flashes of humor, such as the following are included: "One time I was paddling to a rat [muskrat] and heard a noise up there [in a tree]. It was a lynx coming coming down. It wouldn't even look at me, going down to get that dinner. I told him, 'Hey, what the h... you think you're doing?' One long jump and he was on top of the hill" (Malcolm Firth).

So there you have it: interesting anecdotes about First Nations people; fascinating animal stories; lots of information about natural history; the recipe for cooking muskrat tail to perfection.... Why else should you buy this book (and/or the sequel)? Because it's

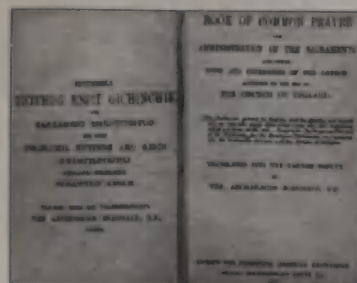
a way to begin to share in the lives of other people and cultures, and to:

We call on governments to do public justice and to protect the freedoms and rights of individuals, groups, and institutions, so that each may freely do the tasks God gives.

(Our World Belongs to God, #53)

And to learn from the Gwich'in: "Anything you hunt you never brag about it. You should never laugh at any animal because you never know when you are going to need it. I still have this tradition in my mind but I don't know if I'm keeping it or not. I don't pass it on to my kids or anybody because nobody does it. You respect what you kill all the time" (Allen Koe).

Trophy hunters, sports heroes, the Donald Trumps and Martha Stewarts, the soft idiot inside each of us that whispers, states, then shouts, "me, Me, ME!" – we all have a lot to learn from Allen Koe and the Gwich'in elders.



The first writing system for the Gwich'in language was created by Archdeacon Robert McDonald (1829-1913), a Church of England missionary who began working with the Gwich'in people in the 1860's.

War and Peace...continued from p.10

ful negotiations?

The failure to tell the truth about a religion that teaches its people that destroying Israel and killing Americans will earn them a privileged place in heaven is what gives this report an aura of unreality.

The synodical committee tells us that its report is intended as a "learning curriculum for the church." The goal is "to help congregations refocus their energies and mission to become places where members have peacemaking and abolishing war at the top of their list of priorities." Bolt is of the opinion that such a goal would not find favor in most congregations, and he would strongly oppose it in his own. He asks: "Why should we hold our CRC congregations hostage to a dubious social gospel program imposed from

the top down by denominational bureaucrats?"

Bolt agrees that the church has a moral obligation to warn against the dangers of national messianism, militarism, and self-aggrandizement. But he insists that such will only have credibility if it is framed by a balanced view of national security. His conclusion: "It would not be wise for Synod 2006 to accept this report and recommend it to the churches. It is in fact an act of violence against the CRC's just-war tradition, if not a full-blown nuclear peace bomb, at least a peace hijacking."

I concur. There is much more in professor Bolt's critique dealing with one of the most vexing issues of our time. Warfare is a terrible scourge, but sometimes necessary to prevent worse. And it is a serious

error to contribute to the impression that the United States is a major threat to world peace, while ignoring the religiously motivated terrorism that is the real threat to the order, justice and peace this report aspires to.

"War and Peace in the CRC" is a thoughtful and timely contribution to a necessary debate. May it be used for the purpose the author intended.

* For a more detailed criticism of such participation, see my *Stones for Bread*, especially chapters 6 and 10.

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Korea

Teaching in Korea – and learning – and paying off student loans

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

For the past several months, my son Jason, 24, and his fiancée Jenn Ronan, 23, have taught English to Korean students in an academy in Suwon, Korea. The experience has been both rewarding and challenging. In a recent e-mail interview, they spelled out why they went to Korea and gave a glimpse of what they've encountered.

Why did you decide to teach English in Korea? What avenues did you pursue to find work there?

The reason that we wanted to teach in Korea was that it allowed us to see a different part of the world while still saving up some money and gaining experience as teachers. Teaching here is especially beneficial for young adults who are paying off student loans. We have free rooms so all we have to pay for is our food, electricity, and personal expenses.

Also, the cross-cultural experience is beneficial. Because we've lived in Canada all of our lives, it's easy to think that most other developed countries operate the same way as we do in Canada. When you come here, your perspective changes.

We came to Korea with an organization called Canadians with Seoul (CWS) (www.canadianswithseoul.com). We had visited many other web sites of recruiting companies, as well, and applied with other organizations, but in the end we chose CWS. Applicants don't pay fees to recruiting companies because the Korean academies cover the cost. The only expense we had was for postage to send our transcripts and diplomas to the school.

Describe the role of academies in Korea. How do they function in relation to the regular schools? What does tuition cost?

The academies (called hagwons) are schools that teach English and function in addition to regular day schools. Because the kids attend the English school after the Korean school, we work odd hours



Jason with one of his classes

like 3:00-9:00 p.m. or 4:00-10:00 p.m.

In the past few years hagwons have dramatically increased in number. One of our colleagues who came to Korea to teach English five years ago said that at that time there were hardly any academies established. Now they're everywhere! There are three on our street alone. As a result, they are run as competitive businesses. The fee for afternoon classes (1.5 hours x three times a week) is approximately 170,000 Korean won (\$200 CAN).

What motivates Korean parents to have English taught to their children?

One of the reasons is that children who know English have opportunities to eventually attend better universities and receive superior jobs. If you are bilingual, you're guaranteed a job somewhere. Another reason is because of social pressure—if a parent is sending his or her child to an academy, then, in order to appear well to do and up to date, other parents will also send their children.

How old are the children that you teach? What is your interaction with the children like?

We are teaching children aged four to sixteen, with most being in the middle. We talk with the kids and play a lot with them. We hug them! Unlike in North American public schools, there are no rules against touching the kids, which is such a blessing for developing rapport and deeper relationships with them. Children are wonderful and we like to show

them that we're caring teachers!

When a child enrolls at an academy, he or she is told to choose an English name. Most of the children pick names that they like or their parents pick names for them. Sometimes children arrive without an English name, so we are allowed to name them whatever we want. Most kids pick common names. Many girls choose names like Jenny, Lily, Susan, Sue, Angela, and Diana. Many boys choose names like Jack, John,

Shawn, Sam, and Chris. Despite all the incredibly hard to remember common names, we've come across some strange ones: Jwan, Raphael, Sky, Kirk, and Chang.

What are some of the challenges you've faced as you've dealt with your employers, the parents, and the children? What are some of the joys?

Our main challenge is to get the children to listen. Many of them do not really care about learning English, which makes our job difficult. If the children don't want to learn, we can't force them to.

The parents are part of the problem, as well. Sometimes they want their children placed in certain classes even if they are too advanced because the friends of their children are in those classes. This leads to a huge disparity in knowledge amongst the students, making our job harder in the classroom because some children are bored and others don't have any understanding of what is being taught.

If we are strict, the parents are happy but the children complain. If we don't give enough work, the children are happy but the parents complain. This can lead to children being pulled out of the academy, and then the teacher is usually blamed.

It is difficult at times, but there are definitely some students that make it worthwhile. We especially enjoy teaching the kindergarten students. They are honest, eager to learn everything they can, mischievous, fun-loving, and affectionate—they always want to sit with us or hold our hands. They tell us about their families and what they like to do at home.

In order to promote his academy, our employer hired a photogra-

pher to take pictures of us with several of the students. A few days later, an advertisement for our academy using one of those photos was on the side of every bus operated by the academy. People talk about which academy they send their children to. When they hear that a young Canadian couple is teaching at a certain school, they'll send their kids there because it's novel, not necessarily because of our teaching abilities.

In what other venues besides the academy have you taught English in Korea?

I, Jason, taught English to one of the presidents of Samsung Electronics, which accounts for 20 per cent of Korea's GDP. At 6:30 a.m. my boss, who got the job for me, drove me to Samsung's huge company complex. I went through the security system and then walked to the man's office. We sat in a big board room and drank green tea, which his secretary served, read the English newspaper, and I tried to teach him the words he didn't know. We discussed topics like Korean culture, business, and Western culture. I enjoyed the private tutoring because motivated adults are so much easier to teach than children are. This job earned my boss a good profit because companies like Samsung Electronics pay approximately \$80 an hour to have an English speaking person tutor one of their employees. I also taught at the Hyundai Research Plant, talking to adults there about topics like racism, culture shock, crime, individualism, and what I like about Korea. They really want to know what Western people are like.

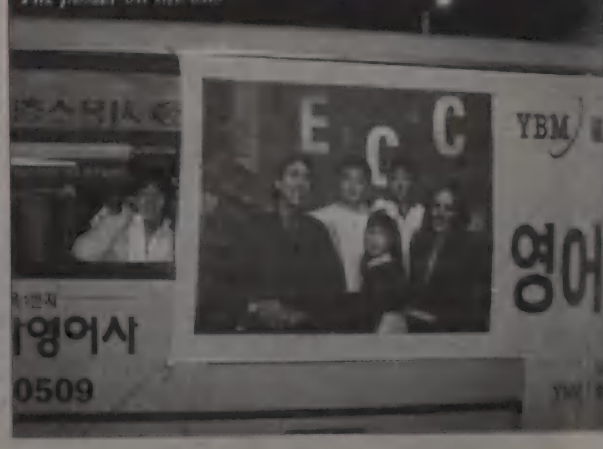
What is the church community like that you worship with?

The Catholic church community that we worship with is very interesting. It is made up of mostly Filipinos, a few Koreans, and some people from other countries. We occasionally meet with a group of foreigners in a prayer group. The Korean priest doesn't speak English very well, so we don't understand much.

The members of the congregation want us to be involved in everything. The first time we attended they asked Jenn to read to the congregation from the Old Testament. They also convinced us to sing Christmas songs



The poster on the bus



Christian living



in front of 200 people. They make us feel at home. We are always welcome to come.

What have you learned about Korea and its culture?

There is little crime here since it is considered very shameful to commit a crime and to be caught. There is very little graffiti, theft, murder, rape, or trafficking of illegal substances. The food is healthy and excellent, especially if you have a taste for marinated meats and spicy foods. Restaurants are everywhere, and the food that is served is plentiful and inexpensive. The service is impeccable; it's done humbly, quickly, efficiently, and happily.

We have started enjoying different kinds of food. The grilled meats are great! The waitress brings a platter of meat accompanied by as many as 15 side dishes including, but not limited to, several kinds of kimchi (marinated cabbage), egg, radish, onion, garlic, bean paste, salad, crab, wasabi salad, tofu, tofu soup and rice. These are always different so it's always a surprise. Then they bring some red leaf lettuce and sesame leaves to the table. Once the meat is cooked, you take it off the grill with your chopsticks, put it into a leaf, and add garlic and bean paste. Then you have a delicious Korean sandwich!

Koreans pay much less tax on goods and services than Canadians do. It's a good place to earn money, since you pay fewer taxes. Most Koreans are concerned about maintaining their physical health through eating properly and exercising. There are few obese people here. However, many people still smoke cigarettes and consume alcohol. Air pollution is also a huge problem.

The mountains, visible almost wherever you are, are beautiful. The old palaces and parks are magnificent and very different from anything we have in Canada. They're a must see! And admission is very cheap.

Taking the subways, taxis, and trains is also inexpensive. The weather is almost always beautiful here.

Korea is getting better at treating foreigners well, so we haven't had too many problems. This country is very xenophobic, and foreigners used to be treated badly, even as short a time as five years ago. The people we work with get along with us, and realize that we do things differently than they do. People serve us with the same courteousness as they treat Koreans.

We've seen a lot of things that make us appreciate living in Canada, but we've also learned that you have to look for what's good in each culture.

What advice would you give to other people who want to teach English overseas?

Do your research! Anyone wanting to teach overseas should make sure they have researched the background of the academy (including how long it has been in existence), the neighborhood and city where it is located, and the living accommodations and their location relative to the academy. Also, interested applicants should request to speak with a foreign teacher at the academy to help ensure that the employer is reputable. It's important to find a credible school and employer, to acquire a proper contract (read it carefully!), and to be sure that accommodation will be provided.

Applicants will also need a valid E2 work visa. We suggest going through a recruiting agency which can act as a liaison between the employer and the employee. They can answer questions for people wanting to teach, since many recruiters have taught overseas themselves. Anyone who would like to learn more about teaching in Korea may contact us by e-mail: jenn-ronan@hotmail.com or jvanderveen5@hotmail.com, and type "Christian Courier Korea Questions" in subject line.

"Your loosened tongue employ"

Berta Hosmar

This past Christmas our church choir sang Mark Lowrey's sensitive, moving anthem, "Mary, did you know?"

From where I stood on the podium I could see my youngest sister Joanne Wind, who was sitting in the middle of the auditorium, mouthing the words along with the choir. When we came to the jubilant, "The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again, the lame will leap, the dumb will speak, the praises of the Lamb" (Mark Lowrey), I could not sing anymore and her husband Fred also had difficulties with these words. But not Joanne, she kept on singing.

"Joanne," I thought, "you cannot walk without the aid of a walker, you have great difficulties seeing and hearing, you can hardly talk, for your tongue is paralyzed, and people often don't understand you at all, you can hardly swallow, and you have to get your nourishment through a G-tube which is inserted in your stomach, and yet you sing along?"

"When will the time come that you will be healed? Certainly, after six years of hoping and praying, it won't happen on this earth again!"

Joanne's health problems began when she was 28 years old. She was a wife, mother of two little girls, part-time teacher and housewife.

A brain tumor was successfully removed, and after surgery and radiation treatment, she improved rapidly. Several years later the couple was gladdened by the birth of a healthy baby boy, and eventually Joanne went back to teaching. Life was good.

But then, at the age of 56, the tumor reappeared and surgery was the only option. The doctors were optimistic. She was in good health and unlike with the previous surgery, they now had no trouble finding the tumor.

Joanne and Fred were told that there was a possibility of complications, but the surgeon still thought she would be home in a week.

However, the results of the surgery were devastating, and it took more than a year before Joanne could leave the hospital. I remember the first time I visited her after the surgery at St. Michael's hospital in Toronto. Her face seemed frozen, without expression, she could hardly see, could not swallow, could not talk, and her hands kept groping for a writing pad.

With great difficulty she wrote the heartbreaking words, "My tongue is lame."

But this is not a story of despair. For almost seven years Joanne, by the grace of God, kept her sense of humor, her willpower and her lovely personality.

When she came home, and the couple moved into an apartment in the retirement complex of Durham Christian Homes in Whitby, Ontario, she was surrounded by a circle of love. A caring husband, loving children, her siblings, cousins and friends all

tried to make life more bearable for her.

Gradually Joanne improved somewhat. Her face, after a few minor surgeries, started to look more like it had looked before her operation. She also re-learned to swallow soft foods. Several friends gave her speech therapy, and especially the people close to her, like her husband and caregiver Fred, started to understand most of what she was saying.

Yet, she always carried a writing pad with her. If we could not understand what she was trying to say we would ask, "Write down one word, Joanne," and she would give us not just one word but a whole sentence, complete with the proper punctuation, like a true teacher.

But talking wore her out, and sometimes, after several attempts to make herself understood, she would say, "Oh, forget it." But she did not give up trying.

With so many disabilities it broke her heart at times that she could not communicate meaningfully with her grandchildren as they grew up, but she loved to hold them when they were babies. Visiting her or taking her out was not a chore. She refused to feel sorry for herself and kept her dignity. She was angry with one doctor, who tried to discuss her situation with her husband, completely ignoring his patient, and she let him know that she was perfectly able to communicate with him if he took the time.

She remained interested in others, who, after spending some time with her, would tend to overlook her disabilities, recognizing that she was still the same Joanne inside, and who would start to confide in her about their own ups and downs. One friend told me, "You go and visit your sister and you ache for her when you see how disabled she is; yet, you find out that you can laugh with her and she lifts you up."

We would catch her doing laundry, seated in her wheelchair. She would bake, iron, or even vacuum on her good days. She immensely enjoyed a story which she told us.

She had been sitting at a table, drinking her coffee, but often, because of the remaining paralysis, some of the liquid would dribble down her chin and she would immediately wipe her mouth with a cloth she always carried with her.

A lady across from her kept staring, so Joanne wrote, "I have trouble closing my mouth."

Whereupon the lady answered with a heartfelt, "You and I both! My husband always tells me I should keep my mouth shut more often!"

Yet she had her bad times. When she tried so hard to make herself understood and noticed that some people avoided her for fear of admitting they had no clue what she was trying to say, and did not want to hurt her feelings, she often felt lonely and frustrated. Sometimes, for no apparent reason, her eyesight would almost fail for a few days.

Continued on page 14...

Ecclesiastes

Too far and too deep

Ecclesiastes 7:24

Whatever wisdom may be, it is far off and most profound
— who can discover it? [NIV]

That which is far off, and exceeding deep,
who can find it out? [KJV]

That which is, is far off and exceeding deep;
who can find it out? [ASVA]

A. van Ruler

Here the Preacher sort of sums up everything he has said before. [The Dutch translation reads like the American Standard Version: "That which is, is far off and exceeding deep; who can find it out?"] When the Preacher speaks of "that which is," he is thinking not first of all of things but of human deeds.

But the same thing could also be said about nature, the earth and the cosmos. They, too, are essentially unfathomable for us and beyond our grasp. Who can fully comprehend them, in the sense of fully discovering the divine wisdom contained in them?

We pass our days in the midst of everything that exists. We use these things in our daily lives, and we may even enjoy and cherish them. Artists represent them in a thousand different ways and scientists create models of them. And with our technology, from nuclear power to space travel, we seize hold of things, dominate and transform them and make them our own.

Yet, in all this we still remain creatures ourselves. We do not become the Creator. All these things simply are, and we find ourselves in their midst. When it comes right down to it, all of created reality seems to be silent, unfathomable.

This silence makes our hearts deeply disconsolate. However, when we are converted, we no longer experience reality as an abyss, but as grounded in the immeasurable goodness of God. And then it is no longer silent but it resounds with praise for our Creator.

Nevertheless, even then it remains beyond us and unfathomable — not now in a negative but in a positive sense. This hinges on the nature of our religion. In biblical religion reality is experienced with appreciation and

praise. Apart from the biblical religion, however, reality keeps devolving into silence or into an abyss.

However, as I said, the Preacher is not speaking about things here but about human deeds. He is talking about all the labor under which man toils under the sun — that is, about history. In the preceding verses he has considered this from every possible angle. And here he sums it up by concluding that everything is too far and too deep for man.

This is a strange thing to say, for he is talking about human deeds, human action and labor. We would be inclined to say that this ought to be very near and transparent to us. After all, he's talking about our own lives and about the things we have made ourselves — in fact, about ourselves.

It makes a certain amount of sense to say that things — nature, the earth and the cosmos — are unfathomable and beyond us. These are around us and outside of us. We can never fully enter into them. All our knowledge of the outside world is a huge mystery.

But here he is speaking of man himself — of our deeds and our lives. To enter into these should not pose any problems, should it? We are already in from the start. We are talking about ourselves. Man is, to a certain extent, his own deeds.

Yet, it is precisely about this that the Preacher says that it is beyond us and so profound that we cannot fathom it. Literally he says that it is far off and deep. When he says that it is far off he means that we can never entirely reach it. We may see the doings of man — all his labor under the sun — but we see it all from afar, not clearly. We only see the outlines.

Human life as the sum of our deeds has an obscure quality, at least when we seek to know it and gain insight into it. Yet, it is real. But when we ask what it means that we are human and that we exert ourselves to act, then it is hard to find a satisfactory answer. What is the worth of all this toil? What does it yield? Does it produce anything enduring? These questions get no definitive answer. So they remain obscure. As actors we humans remain at an unbridgeable distance from ourselves.

The Preacher uses another metaphor as well. He



The Magdalene with nightlight by Georges LaTour

doesn't just say that it is far off but also that it is deep. You may look into it, and you can look deeper and deeper until at last you lose yourself in it and don't see anything anymore — you are staring into darkness.

This, too, is true of human deeds. We are here. We live. We act. We work. We exert ourselves to achieve something. And we may achieve a great deal, but then we ask ourselves: what is it that we have in hand? Is it something that has ultimate and absolute worth? Will it satisfy me and give me rest? Can any of us answer "yes" to those questions?

There is so much in human existence that is absurd, that in the end all our works slip out of our hands. Death makes this very clear, but mortality eats away at every aspect of reality. And this is true not only of mortality, but also of wickedness, injustice, stupidity and violence. All these make human life as a life of deeds unfathomably deep.

But what do we do about this unfathomable and unreachable fact of existence? We could wax lyrical about it, and declaim about the vastness and rawness of human life. It even embraces death and evil. Let's heroically hurl ourselves into it and rejoice in it!

But the Preacher doesn't mean to celebrate the absurdity of life. This is alien to biblical religion. It is far too violent. There is something demonic about such an attitude. Only Satan is happy about sin and death and therefore about absurdity.

Another possible reaction is to turn away from the unfathomableness of life. The most extreme form of this is suicide. But we can also commit an inward form of suicide. We remain in life, but inwardly we turn away from the fact that we exist. We no longer will it because it all seems so unreachable and unfathomable.

But the Preacher does not go in this direction either. This too is alien to biblical religion. Our Creator has put us here in this life. He willed us, and we may not will to undo it.

All that remains for us is therefore humility, modesty, simplicity, readiness, obedience and trust. We cannot attain to the wisdom of God in our existence and we will never fathom it. Only one possibility remains: to be and to live it.

"Your loosened tongue employ" ...continued from page 13

Thankfully, it always returned and she could read again.

The last time I took her out for a cappuccino at Tim Hortons, she told me how thankful she was that a new grandson had been born, and that she could not wait to see him. "Fred and I are so blessed," she said. "We have each other, three healthy kids with their spouses, and they are all committed Christians, and now nine healthy grandchildren."

That was two weeks before she died in her sleep of pneumonia. The date was March 13, 2006.

We had seen her gradually become weaker. She looked so frail when she entered our church sanctuary, pushing her walker. During Praise and Worship time she always insisted on standing up just like everybody else, but often Fred had to support her.

We also noticed that towards the end of her life she could cope less successfully with her disabilities and

sometimes she admitted she was angry with herself for her inability to be like others. "I feel so useless! I can't walk alone, I can hardly talk, and without this feeding tube I would die," she would say. But those moods never lasted long and she still counted her blessings.

But God saw how tired she was of fighting and lovingly took her home.

Her grandchildren reacted in different ways. A few years ago our dad died at the age of almost 103, but he still rode his bike at the age of 101. A grandson by marriage often said jokingly, "Opa will not die but ride his bike to heaven, just like the prophet Elijah went to heaven in a chariot of fire."

His three-year-old daughter Zoe told me solemnly, "My Oma died, but she is sitting on the back of Opa Flim's bike in heaven, and are they ever going fast!"

That same granddaughter insisted she wanted to see her Oma at the fu-

neral home. When she saw a picture of Joanne on the closed casket she pointed at the coffin and demanded, "Open it!"

But she was satisfied when told that she would see Oma again in heaven.

At the cemetery some of Joanne and Fred's grandchildren, tired of waiting, started dancing and singing, "Ring around the rosie." Another little boy asked, "How deep is that hole?"

Joanne would have enjoyed the reactions of her grandchildren immensely. She is buried, facing a statue of Jesus, arms stretched out in front of him, palms up.

"You may have her now, Jesus," I thought when the casket was lowered.

It's such a comfort to know that Jesus cradles all believers in his arms and carries them Home. And we know, during this Easter time, that Joanne can now talk again and sing praises to God — together with all the saints who went before her.

Family/Community

Itching for the end of the oatmeal ordeal

Lisa M. Petsche

The chicken pox invaded our home for the second time in recent family history.

The first time it was our daughter who came down with a moderate case of the nasty affliction. This prompted me to begin a daily head-to-toe inspection of her younger brother, Sean, expecting he would contract it as well.

But several weeks went by without a sign, so I figured he was in the clear. Soon after, though, he developed flu-like symptoms. The next day the first spots appeared. Sean hadn't escaped the chicken pox – or “chicken puffs,” as he originally referred to it – after all.

Unlike his sister, though, Sean got it bad. For several unbelievable days the pox multiplied, leaving no part of his body unaffected. In some areas he had blotches where the pox were closely spaced. (On his forehead alone he had twenty spots, and about forty on each foot – including the soles.)

It was a pathetic sight to behold. Poor Sean could hardly believe his blighted appearance, either, and worried that the spots might never go away. He even asked a couple of times if he was going to die.

The hardest part for my husband and me was knowing there was nothing we could do to halt the blistering outbreak. Naturally, we did our best to minimize Sean's discomfort along the way. But whereas with Alex we had dabbed calamine lotion individually on each of her spots, with Sean we had to slather it on like sunblock.

Convincing him to take those lumpy but effective brown oatmeal baths several times a day was a challenge, especially since he's not crazy about bathing to begin with.

Moreover, he didn't appreciate the absence of bubbles. I had to invent all kinds of silly water games to keep him distracted until the soothing effects of the oatmeal kicked in.

The worst time, though, was at night. After his evening soak, Sean's “itchies” would subside enough to allow him a couple hours' sleep. But around midnight he would wake up crying and twitching, tormented once more.

My husband and I took shifts responding to his distress calls (all-too-reminiscent of the trying days – nights, actually – when Sean had infant colic).

Bleary-eyed and yawning, I would apply lotion to the offending blisters of the moment, then ask Sean, “Are you sure you don't have any more itchy spots?” Once he affirmed this, I would cap the bottle and go to the bathroom to wash my hands, eager to head back to bed.

Inevitably, though, the call would ring out, “Mommy, I found another one.” It seemed every time we repeated this routine, fresh lesions became evident. And so by morning Sean looked like he had fallen into a barrel of pink chalk.

Throughout the night, the part of my brain that was more or less awake kept telling me I should run another oatmeal bath and have Sean soak in it for 20 minutes. But at three o'clock in the morning he was definitely not in the mood for bathing, and I couldn't blame him. I wasn't keen on keeping a tub-side vigil at that hour, either.

The unfortunate timing and length of his ordeal meant that Sean missed out on two birthday parties in the process. The first was a family event, where his three-year-old cousin mournfully explained that Sean wasn't there because “he has chicken pockets.” The other party was for one of Sean's school friends. He had been anticipating it for weeks, carrying around the invitation and even sleeping with it.

He was a surprisingly good sport about these disappointments.

Fortunately, he is now in the healing stage. He's even regaining his lost appetite, as evidenced by his request for homemade muffins.

I gladly whipped up a batch of our family's favorite kind: oatmeal.

When I placed one of the oven-fresh muffins on his plate with a flourish, Sean scrutinized it, gave it an exploratory sniff and asked me what kind it was.

“Your favorite – oatmeal,” I replied, surprised that he had to ask.

Kindness –
pay it forward

There is something to be said about kindness. A kind word can have a powerful effect on people, much more powerful than an unkind word.

I'm sure we can all remember acts of kindness that we have shown or that others have shown to us. They seem to resonate deep within us and we don't easily forget them.

For example, one Sunday morning I was playing a two-page song from the hymnal on the organ in church. As the congregation was singing along, the music came to the bottom of the first page. When I looked up to the top of the second page I quickly realized that it was missing. The song was not familiar enough to me to be able to continue playing in four-part harmony but I did know the melody well enough to continue playing with my right hand, while struggling with the other hand to find another hymnal and open it to that particular hymn.

In the midst of this minor chaos, three things happened: First, the congregation immediately realized that something was wrong. Second, my body temperature increased dramatically. Third, and most memorably, I was cooled down in body and spirit by an act of kindness. My eye caught a member of the congregation that was sitting near the organ. She was smiling. Her face was encouraging and her eyes said to me to me, “Don't worry.”

It was a true act of kindness.

Here's another example: My last column on coffee prompted a gentleman in Michigan to e-mail me and describe his personal connection with the column and to tell me that he appreciated the article. It was very kind and was more encouraging than he knew.

And yet another example: A few times a year I play organ for a Canadian Estonian congregation. It is a small congregation, 15-20 in number, and the entire service is in the Estonian language, a language that I do not speak. It is a sung liturgy with a lot of pastor-congregation responsive singing.

During one particular service, I was playing what I thought was the opening hymn. As the prelude ended and the hymn was supposed to begin, I realized that the congregation was not singing. It was evident that something was wrong. The pastor came to me to tell me I was playing the wrong hymn.

He looked at me with soulful eyes and said, “Thanks, Mommy, but I don't want anything oatmeal for a while.”



Lisa M. Petsche is a freelance writer specializing in spiritual and family life.

My window seat

Mendelt Hoekstra



His words were memorable and kind. He could have said something such as, “You are playing the wrong hymn,” but he spoke softly to me and said, “We know a more familiar tune to this hymn.”

That was kindness.

Kindness can also be self-serving. When I hold open a door for someone at a store or help someone with their bags, I do so partly because it makes me feel better for helping them. Most people donate more money to causes that offer tax receipts than to causes that do not provide that tax benefit. This can be chalked up to human sin or our innate sense of selfishness.

Then when we think of Jesus on the cross and how kind and selfless he was to die for us, we may appreciate it even more. In fact, maybe the difference between selfishness and selflessness is the definition of kindness.

Perhaps some people are born kind, but I also believe that kindness is a learned trait. Not only that, kindness can be born out of difficult circumstances.

A number of years ago there was a movie that came out called “Pay It Forward.” The movie is about a young boy, troubled by his mother's alcoholism and fears of his abusive but absent father. He begins an intriguing assignment from his teacher: he must think of something that would improve mankind – and then he had to put it into action. He comes up with the notion of paying a favor not back, but forward, essentially repaying good deeds not with payback, but with new good deeds done to three new people. His efforts to make good on his idea bring about a revolution not only in the lives of himself, his mother and teacher, but in those of an ever-widening circle of people completely unknown to him.

When we think of Christ's death, we should take that gift and pay it forward to those around us. This doesn't mean just sharing the good news but acting on it in our daily lives.

Mendelt D. Hoekstra is the founder and director of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda, an organization owned and operated by the Mennonite Brethren Conference of Ontario, that supports adults with developmental possibilities. He lives in Vineland, ON with Marisa and their two children.



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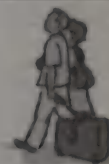
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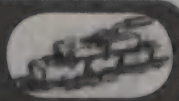
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Afghanistan

Building Trust

Vicky Van Andel Ed.



Glimpses of grace in Afghanistan

Here follows act two of my Afghanistan experience. I described act one in my last column. I talked about my attempt to prepare for this trip: my anxieties about my wardrobe and my hopes of meeting Afghan women to talk with.

Well, I'll say right off the bat that once I arrived in Kabul my makeshift garb and my concerns about my appearance quickly became irrelevant. I was immediately drawn into what was going on around me: the crowds of robed, veiled people walking the dusty and muddy streets of Kabul, the massive general destruction of a clearly once beautiful city, the grinding overt poverty as displayed by endless rows of makeshift huts serving as trading posts surrounded by mounds of twisted steel, and overall scenery that looked like a veritable wasteland. I was stunned.

I was not prepared for what I saw. Not because I did not study up on Afghanistan, but because my imagination had not been able to fathom such sights. I had tricked myself into believing that life in Afghanistan was not be as bad as it is cracked up to be. The truth is it is worse.

Nevertheless, I had an interesting time and would not have missed this trip for anything. Besides all the things I was able to see, I had wonderful opportunities to talk to Afghan women. My self-assigned goals for my trip to Afghanistan were completely and fully met.

It is hard to know where to begin to describe my overall experience. Afghanistan is a complex country with a complex people and a complex history. Time seems to have stood still there since Jesus walked the earth. I cannot possibly do justice to Afghanistan in one column. Yet one column is all I'm going to write about it. I will lift out my most memorable experiences and touching moments.

My conscious plan to live in the moment and let life unfold stood me in good stead. Opportunities came my way almost intuitively. By opening myself up to them I received many glimpses of grace.

The first good omen came at the airport in Dubai while we were checking in for our flight to Kabul. I had taken along two hockey bags full of school supplies for Afghan children, all donated by the members of the Inglewood Christian Reformed Church. The bags weighed a total of one hundred pounds. My luggage was one hundred pounds overweight. When I explained the bags contained school supplies for Afghan children, the agent listened to me, thought for a second, then pushed the bags along without a word. She made no comment, created no hassle and had quiet compassion and complicit understanding.

We stayed at a German guesthouse, located next to the university of Kabul. The hostess was wonderful, the food



was good, the electricity undependable, and the internet access elusive. There was enough hot water for exactly half a shower and the water freely splashed all over the cold bathroom floor.

I could walk to the campus when the gate to the university was open. One time I even got permission to send an email home from the IT centre, using a computer donated by the German government. The campus had a low stone wall around it. Very recently a high, steel, spiked wall was added to it to keep women safe from kidnappers. The university entrance is guarded and the university is closed on weekends and holidays.

Afghanistan has 19 universities, a number of them new. In 2002, 4000 students attended university, now there are 40,000. The team of educators I was with, and which included my husband, met with 17 presidents and 25 deans in the conference hall of the guest house over a period of four days, to discuss challenges in university management. It was a revealing exercise. Interestingly, the team was able to offer their faith perspective without overtly mentioning the Christian faith. To Afghans, faith is central to life. It appeared that these people had no problem accepting that faith, of whatever variety, is central to the lives and university education of others.

I had no obligations and was free, except that I could not go out alone. I was given access to a driver/translator. On the first day I had a meeting with the deputy minister of Social Affairs and Labour. It had been arranged for me, and so I went to see this person. I discussed with him how best to distribute the school supplies and money I had with me. It turned out to be an interesting meeting.

I was led into a room lined with low couches, and served tea by a kind, bowing, draped Afghan man. The deputy minister sat in one corner, and I decked out in my Afghan get-up and accompanied by my translator/driver, sat at a 45 degree angle from him. After a pregnant moment of silence I started talking about my mission. The deputy minister, actually wearing a real suit, quickly broke out in a warm, gentle and open smile. "I'm listening," he said. "Go ahead, I am taking time for you." Afghan men can

be very charming.

I had a good conversation with him. He told me that Afghanistan has 800,000 orphans in 49 orphanages, two located in Kabul. There are many other orphanages operated by non-government agencies. After my talk with him I visited a barren kindergarten and an equally spartan orphanage and delivered my supplies. Both organizations were managed by capable women quite aware of their deprived circumstances. I could read it on their faces. I saw groups of boys with their heads shaven (to avoid lice I'm assuming) and with open smiling faces, and shy girls draped in layers of shawls and skirts. I also noticed long, cold, stone, atmosphere-deprived hallways.

The next day I took a ride into the country, up and over the hills, to look at a fruit tree planting project for widows, initiated by a non-government organization in partnership with farmers who owned the land. I had a chance to see the country from a different perspective. Though the scenery remained somewhat colorless, the grass in the country was greener than in the city. I saw nice villages nestled in hills, fast flowing streams, flowering fruit trees and the occasional lonely sojourner on the road. It was a healing interlude for my color-deprived soul.

For lunch we sat on the floor along the walls of a hut, and after a hand washing ritual, ate rice and flat bread from a table cloth on the floor. The food had been cooked in a nearby hut by an Afghan young man on hot coals in the ground, somehow. As honored guest I received utensils while the Afghans ate with their hands.

A week in Afghanistan makes me no expert, but I think I saw two groups of women: those who are educated, have jobs, and are aware of the discrimination against women and sad about it, and those who stay at home and wear burkas. They may be sad about it too, but I could not tell.

The largest group is the latter. The streets in Kabul teem with people, 80 per cent of whom are men and boys. Half of the women walking on the streets wear burkas. I saw relatively few girls. I saw no babies either. Overall, the women look shy.

Once, while walking outside, I noticed a woman in a burka looking at me (it is hard to tell for sure with burkas). I stopped and carefully extended my hand to her. Gently I received a hand back from underneath the burka. I thanked her and wished her well. Too bad I could not see her face.

It is no longer compulsory to wear burkas. Yet many women do. Do they see it as personal protection or has it become a habit after years of oppression? I looked into the eyes of one scarfed girl standing on the side of the road.



Afghanistan



As soon as she met my gaze she grabbed her shawl and covered her face. Then, as if on second thought, she whipped it back and gave me a wide grin. When I pointed to my camera to ask if I could take her picture she once again, and almost reflexively, grabbed her scarf. But decided better of it, pulled it aside, and offered me a fearless smile.

I decided to buy a burka for five dollars. It is quite a beautiful garment in itself. I wanted to know what it feels like to wear it and how much vision it offers. The netted area for seeing through measures ten centimeters across and five centimeters deep. I found out that vision is very limited in a burka. A lifetime of wearing such a thing would reduce me to a vacuum.

Afghanistan was more progressive thirty years ago than it is now, in terms of the role of women. War, civil war, and the Taliban years have wiped out the self respect of a whole generation. I wondered how people survived the Taliban rule and asked about it. I heard many stories.

Some people escaped to Pakistan with their families. One woman told me she stayed in Kabul and organized a network of bakeries to feed poor families. The bakeries also served as a cover for a secret school for girls and women.

"It served two purposes," she says. "It ensured that families had enough food (each family received five flat breads per day) and it gave women a chance to learn. I wanted to help the women of my country because I am educated and have the skills."

One day the Taliban showed up in front of the bakery, confiscated her laptop and threw her, and three other women, in jail.

"I never once gave in to them, no matter how much they beat me" she said. "After I was released, they continued to beat me, but I never gave up."

She showed me her stiff neck and shoulders, lasting damage due to beatings. Never before have I met a woman who has suffered such blatant cruelty.

One of my drivers (a highly educated man) told me he went to the market with his wife one day during the Taliban years (women could only go outside if they were

accompanied by men). While there, his wife got an asthma attack and lifted her burka for some air. A Taliban saw it and threatened to beat him if he did not take his wife home immediately. The anger and powerlessness of that moment was still clearly visible in his eyes.

In spite of all this, I saw hope in Afghanistan. Amidst the rubble in the city of Kabul, kids are happily running around playing soccer. People appear to feel free compared to the Taliban years.

"The younger generation is hopeful" I heard someone say. "They are trying to take distance from the older people who seem to be



preoccupied with their losses. You can't blame older people for dwelling on memories of better times. But it just doesn't help. We have to move on. We need the hope and energy of the young to rebuild our country."

Afghans are a spirited people. They have a gentleness about them. They are very good looking. The sound of their language is soft and melodious. I enjoyed meeting them. I made some connections which I will try to maintain. I also connected with a couple of relief workers. I asked one woman why she chose to work in Afghanistan. This is what she said: "When my mother died I was in

Erosion of trust, effectiveness feared as military adopts humanitarian role

Gladys Terichow

Having the Canadian military combine military, diplomatic and humanitarian activities in Afghanistan could compromise the effectiveness of Canadian humanitarian agencies elsewhere, says an international development worker in Winnipeg.

Humanitarian agencies working in conflict situations want to be perceived by local people as independent agencies that provide impartial assistance to all people affected by the conflict, said Willie Reimer, coordinator of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada Food Disaster Material Resource department.

"We strive for independence, impartiality and neutrality," said Reimer, who worked in Sudan and East Africa, 1986-1995.

"Our agenda is determined by the needs of the people. At the heart of our assistance is our involvement with local people. We don't independently implement programs. We work in partnership with local people to assist them to get to a place where they can have a say in their future."

Working in collaboration with a number of non-government organizations in Afghanistan, the Mennonite Central Committee has provided \$7.9 million Cdn./\$6.8 million U.S. assistance since 1996. This assistance includes shipments of wheat, beans, lentils, canned meat, blankets and school kits.

MCC assistance also includes working with local partners to rehabilitate underground water streams, helping widows find a source of income and promoting health care. "We walk hand-in-hand with our local partners as they bring hope to the people," said Reimer.

Reimer, who has a masters degree in peace studies, said Canada's integrated mission in Afghanistan is not only damaging Canada's international reputation as peacekeepers, it also affects the work of MCC and other Canadian humanitarian agencies.

a lot of pain. Helping other people in pain helps me bear my own pain. Do you understand that?"

"I do" I said, "Totally."

I'll leave my story at that. It was a good trip.

These are three recently published and very good books describing life in Afghanistan.

A Bed of Red Flowers: In Search of My Afghanistan by Nelofer Pazira

Kabul in Winter by Ann Jones

The Swallows of Kabul by Yasmina Khadra

There is also a best-selling novel set in pre-war Afghanistan: *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact her via e-mail at: vickyv@telus.net

"Combining humanitarian and military activities blurs the lines. It changes how we are seen and how we are accepted, not only in Afghanistan but also in the rest of the world."

The challenge for MCC, he added, is to maintain a clearly articulated identity as a faith based agency that chooses to build long-term and trusting relationships with people living in communities experiencing war and social disruptions.

"It is important to work with all people affected by conflict - those in areas controlled by the government and also those in areas controlled by non-government forces."

His experiences with wars in Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia and Rwanda helped him appreciate the role that MCC and other international organizations can play in the peace process. "Those directly affected by the conflict must be allowed to participate in mitigating the conflict," he said, explaining the role of international development agencies in supporting local organizations as "friends of the peace process" but the "peace agenda should be driven by the countries in the region."

Military forces, meanwhile, have a political agenda that undermines the values of impartiality, working with local partners and helping local people take ownership of the conflict and peace processes.

"The military is trained to provide security - that's their job, that's their training," he explained. "In extreme circumstances it may be necessary for a foreign military to combine active combat and humanitarian assistance but as a general rule it is best to separate the activities of the army and humanitarian agencies."

"The motives of a foreign military are clearly questioned when they get involved in humanitarian work."

Gladys Terichow is a writer for the Mennonite Central Committee

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Reflections



Welcome to my perch
Best Witout

Don't worry; the Irish don't!

I don't know how many of you readers have Irish blood coursing through your veins. Whatever your situation, I hope this column is as pleasant to you as the soap called Irish spring. It all began when I stopped at a garage sale one day and came across a wall cloth on which an Irish wisdom statement was printed. It read:

In life, there are two things to worry about:
Either you are well or you are sick.
If you are well, there is nothing to worry about.
If you are sick, there are two things to worry about:
Either you will get better or you will die.
If you get better, there is nothing to worry about.
If you die, there are two things to worry about:
Either you go to heaven or you go to hell.
If you go to heaven, there is nothing to worry about.
If you go to hell, you will be too busy shaking the hands of all your friends, you won't have time to worry.
So why worry?

I did not buy the cloth, even though it cost only a dollar. Something told me I would not get a lot of comfort out of this piece of Irish folklore. As I biked away from the garage sale, my thoughts went to Saint Patrick, the missionary from the fourth century who brought the gospel to Ireland. What would he have thought of this wall cloth?

I decided to check it out, though I could guess the outcome. I spent an hour in the library of the Lutheran Concordia Seminary on the campus of Brock University. The seminary has a lot of books on the history of the Christian religion. I found a little book that contained all the writings we have of Saint Patrick. Patrick was not a very cultured man, consequently, he wrote very little. The main work is his *Confession*. I also read the little that is known about his life.

Saint Patrick

Let me tell you a bit about Saint Patrick. He lived with his parents and siblings on an estate near the coast of England. Although his father was a deacon in the Church of England, the family practised very little religion. Patrick himself did not bother with religion – he certainly did not apply himself to his studies and he lived a reckless life. He also committed a serious sin, which later came to haunt him. At the age of 16, he and some of his fathers servants were kidnapped by a band of Irish raiders. They were brought to Ireland, where Patrick was sold as a slave to a pagan landlord in Ireland. He worked there as a shepherd for six years.

While a slave, Patrick found the Lord and led a life of prayer and voluntary self-denial. One night he heard a voice in his dream. The voice told him that God had forgiven him his serious sin (we don't know what it was). He was also told to leave Ireland and that a ship was waiting for him at some distance. The next day Patrick made his get-away and, after walking 200 miles, he found a ship bound for France that day. He was allowed to come along and thus made his way to France and eventually to England, where he was reunited with his parents and family.

His parents were very happy to see their son

again, and they urged him to stay and settle down. But again a voice spoke to Patrick. It told him to become a missionary and return to Ireland to convert the people who had enslaved him. Patrick listened to that voice. He first went to France to become a monk and be educated in the Christian faith.

In 423, when he was 47 years old, he returned to Ireland as a bishop. When Patrick came, Ireland was almost entirely pagan. When he died at age 78, he left Ireland almost completely Christianized. To this day, Saint Patrick is considered the patron saint of Ireland, and people celebrate Saint Patrick's Day on March 17, the day of his death. Of course, they no longer pay tribute to him as a saint so much. It's more a nationalistic holiday celebrated with green beer in pubs.

The point of my story is to tell you that Ireland broke with paganism in a short time and accepted the gospel, which included the Sermon on the Mount and its advice not to worry. In other words, the Irish people did not accept the pagan advice I found on that wall cloth at the garage sale. I would like to believe that even today, many Irish people still follow the teachings of Christ.

Jesus' wisdom

Jesus was not Irish, of course. He was a Jew. But Jesus loved the Irish well enough that he used the extraordinary means of making a simple, unbelieving lad a slave, converting him and then calling him to convert the Irish. Part of that call to conversion was to invite the Irish not to worry but to trust in God and to seek his Kingdom.

When Jesus gave his unique wisdom statement about the uselessness of worrying in Matthew 6, he combined what we might call a bit of homespun common sense with a lesson in biology. He then added a philosophical comment about life and topped it off with a theological teaching about God's providence.

The common sense part is the statement: "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?" That bit of advice makes sense to everyone. You don't have to be a believer to accept that bit of homespun wisdom. Just think about it. Does worrying make you richer, better, smarter, taller? Of course not. So why worry?

The lesson in biology comes when Jesus tells us to look at the birds in the air and the lilies in the field. Okay, let's look at the birds and the lilies. Do birds worry about where their next meal will come from? Nah. Do lilies worry about whether or not they are dressed prettily? No, of course not. None of them worry, yet, they are well fed and extremely well dressed. We are much more valuable than birds or flowers, says Jesus. So why worry?

The philosophical comment about life comes when Jesus says that life is more important than food and the body, more important than clothes. A simple meal and simple clothes are all we need. Don't run yourself ragged about what to drink or wear, as the pagans do, says Jesus. Don't worry about your health or your job. When it comes to being happy, we need very little, don't we. There is so much to enjoy in life without consumer-

ism. A quiet lake and a soft breeze and a nice conversation with a friend still costs nothing. So why worry?

And the theological teachings contain the statements about God's constant care, and God's desire to give his children what they need, not necessarily what they want. God loves us dearly and he is in control of the world. So why worry?

Seek first God's Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things you worry about will be added to you.

Those who don't worry

So is the act of not worrying a sign of spiritual maturity? Not necessarily. Some people don't worry very much or they don't worry at all. Is that because they are spiritually higher up than we are? It doesn't have to be that.

Some people are more stoic than others. They work with the idea of "What will be, will be." Will I be happy? Will I be sad? Que sera, sera." What's the use of worrying. They would agree with Jesus' statement: You can't add an inch to your stature by worrying. But the rest of Jesus' statement would not apply to their way of looking at things.

Some people are eternal optimists. They work with the proposition that things will work out. More or less like the song: "Always walk on the sunny side of the street." They fool themselves into thinking that things will turn out fine. Like the fellow falling from a 12-storey building and saying at the halfway point: "So far so good."

Some don't care about others and would not lose any sleep over a sick neighbor or a dying relative. They don't worry because they don't care.

Others lack imagination. They focus only on the present. Maybe their imagination no longer functions or never did. Maybe they never ask themselves any questions. Maybe they have been dulled by past experiences or pain. Whatever the situation is like, these people live every day pretty much the same way, without color or drama.

All these people somehow manage not to worry too much, which makes their life seem happier, but in reality they miss out on a lot of richness and blessings.

A full spirit

But what about you and me who will worry from time to time? The good news is that the ability to worry shows that you are fully human. It's very normal to entertain doubts and worries. It shows that you are a caring and imaginative person. You're not a stoic or a fatalist. You're too realistic to be an eternal optimist. You're a sensitive and loving person.

But the bad news is that when you worry, you're not seeing the bigger picture; you're blind to the spiritual reality that surrounds you.

Remember the story of Elisha and the City of Dothan? The king of Aram wanted to kill Elisha because Elisha could tell the king of Israel what the king of Aram was planning in his bedroom. So the king of Aram surrounded Dothan with his army, including horses and chariots. When Elisha's servant got up the next morning and saw the enemy's army, he got scared. But Elisha told him: "Those who

are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed that the Lord would open the eyes of his servant. The Lord did. He opened the eyes of Elisha's servant. And what did he see? He saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. And then Elisha prayed to the Lord to strike the enemy with blindness. The Lord did, and Elisha led them away like a bunch of sheep.

This story is a good one to remember when you are worried about something. Remember especially Elisha's statement to his servant: "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them" – whether the "them" is real people or unseen forces that cause illness or economic trouble.

The key to not worrying lies in focusing on the Kingdom of God. That's why the heart of Jesus' advice about not worrying comes when he says: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness." When you seek first God's Kingdom and God's righteousness, then God comes and fills your heart with love and peace. Perhaps that sounds too simple or too abstract for you. But it's true. It's almost as logical as the law of physics. If you fill a space with one thing, there no longer is room for another thing. If you fill a pot with sand, there no longer is room for stones. The same is true in the realm of the spirit. When you are filled with God's love and God's Spirit, then there is no room for fear and worry.

Perfect love casts out fear, says Scripture. That means it also casts out worry, because worry is a kind of fear, fear for what may happen in the future. When you are filled with God's Spirit, then you know that you are safe and that God will always be with you. You feel surrounded by God's care. And you're able to surrender those things which worry you.

Back to the Irish

I started out talking about that Irish saying on a wall cloth. It gives good advice when it says, "So why worry?" But it fails to provide a key that opens the door to peace of mind. That's why I didn't buy the cloth. Saint Patrick would not have bought the wall cloth either. He would probably lament that his beloved Ireland had turned back to paganism. Patrick has better advice for those of us who worry. He himself faced danger and hostility without worry. Listen what he wrote in his *Confession*:

"So indeed I must accept with equanimity whatever befalls me, be it good or evil, and always give thanks to God, who taught me to trust in him always without hesitation." (Art. 34)

"Daily I expect murder, fraud, or captivity, or whatever it may be; but I fear none of these things because of the promises of heaven. I have cast myself into the hands of God Almighty, who rules everywhere." (Art. 55)

Saint Patrick, or Bishop Patrick, if you will, was not afraid of the future. He was focused on the Kingdom of God, and he lived in the expectation of the resurrection. His heart was filled with God's grace and the love of Jesus. There was no more room in the inn for worry.

The only thing I want to quote from the Irish wall cloth is the last statement: "So why worry?" The rest is just Irish blarney.

Classifieds

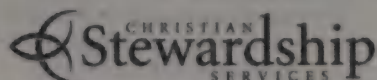
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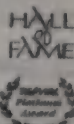
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Birthdays

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Pieter C. Flikweert

celebrated **80 years of life**
on April 9, 2006.

For a man who follows after his LORD,
for a husband made complete by the love
between him and our mom, now with Jesus,
for a father whose character, love, strength
and wisdom bless our lives daily,
for this we give God the glory!

Love from your family,
those who have gone before you and those
who live with you in hope.

Corresponding address: Apt 222 - 40 Elm St
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Harriet Wierenga (Westra)

#124 - 10041 - 149 St Edmonton AB T5P 4V7
celebrated her **90th birthday** on April 10.

Her children:

Dixie & Bill VandenBom, Peter & Anne Wierenga
Jean & Clarence Weening, Herman Wierenga
13 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren
thank God for her faithfulness and love.

Mom you are a blessing to us all.

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Obituary

Koekange, Dr. The Neth. Calgary, Alberta

HERMAN DROST

passed away to be with his LORD on
Sunday March 26, 2006 at the Foothills
Medical Centre at the age of 75 years.

He is lovingly remembered by:

his wife of 44 years - Jenny Drost (Hummel)
sons Robert and Andrew & Lee-ann and
2 grandchildren - Zender & Hayley

The funeral service was held March 30 at the
First Chr. Ref. Church of Calgary.
Pastor Mike Koot officiated.

Correspondence: Jenny Drost
3319 - 46 St SW, Calgary AB T3E 3W9

Anniversaries

May 4, 1956

May 4, 2006

*The Lord will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore. Psalm 121:8*

Celebrating the **50th Wedding Anniversary**
of our parents

JACOB AND ANNIE VANDER MEULEN (nee Colyn)

With much praise and thanks we invite you
to share this special occasion with them.

Earl & Sharon: Jennifer, Diana
Christine & Luke: Natalie & Dave,
Ryan & Sarah (Brynlea), Robyn, Chad
Evelyn & Sid: Alicia & Raymond, Matthew, Ben
Marlene & Jerry: Michael, Tyler, Danielle
Liz & Don

Jackie & Michael: Nikita, Michael, Natasha
Andrew & Jennifer: Taylor, Will

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Psalm 103:17,18

Jonkman / Harbers

CLARE AND NELLIE JONKMAN

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April 25, 2006 D.V. We are thankful to God for
bringing our families together and blessing us
with his presence. God is faithful and good!

With love:

Peter Jonkman, *Georgetown, ON*

Bill & Laura Harbers, *Brinston, ON*

Alison, Michael, Jennifer, Emily

Ken & Loriann Harbers, *Chesterville, ON*

Shannon, Brent, Tyler

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**60th Anniversary**

Welsrijp, Friesland, April 30, 1946

FEITE (Fred) AND LOKKJE GREIDANUS (nee Gietema)

were united in marriage, with the wedding text:
"I will instruct you" (Ps.32:8a).

With joy in our hearts and thankfulness to the LORD
for his guidance and goodness throughout 60 years,
we invite friends and relatives to celebrate with us on
May 6, 2006 D.V. at an **Open House** from 2 - 4 p.m.
in the Horizon Hall of King Tower, Holland Christian Homes.

Love from your children: Pieter & Kim, Don & Kathleen,
Nynka & Albert Greer, Joan & Harm Horlings,
Rick & Joanne, Stuart & Kim, Len & Colleen,
Wayne & Ilda, Neil & Evelyn,
your grandchildren and your great-grandchildren.

Mailing address: PT 202 Holland Christian Homes
7900 McLaughlin Road S
Brampton ON L6Y 5A7

We give praise to God for 50 years of marriage!

**FRED AND GRACE MEYERINK** (nee Smit)

will celebrate their **50th Wedding Anniversary** (D.V.).

You are invited to celebrate this special day at an
Open House, on Saturday, May 6, 2006 from 2 - 4 p.m.
at Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in York, Ontario
(*Best Wishes only, please.*)

Congratulations Mom & Dad, Grandpa & Grandma.

Alice & Bart Velthuisen, *Scarborough, ON*

Jolene Velthuisen, *Gallup, NM*

Peter Velthuisen, *Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI*

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REV. JAMES LIEBENBERG from the Presbyterian Church of Can-
ada has accepted a call to Community CRC of Richmond Hill
effective May 1, 2006. Rev. Liebenberg was declared eligible for call
in the CRC by Classis Quinte in their September 2005 meeting.

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With joy we look forward to celebrating
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of our parents,

JIM AND GINY MULDER (nee Koning)

We praise God for his gifts of health and
happiness, and pray that Dad and Mom
may enjoy many more years together.

Greta & Tom Luimes
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Shawn Luimes & Natalie Byker

Eric & Brenda Mulder

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Classifieds / Job Opportunities

Obituaries

ELIZABETH DORSMAN (nee Kranenburg)

In her 82th year, went home be with her LORD on Friday
March 24, 2006 at Shalom Manor.

Beloved wife of the late Cornelius Dorsman
Dear mother and Oma of:

Casey & Jane - Daniel, Larua, Lisa
Henry & Carol - Darryl & Nicole, Jeff & Jaymie, Rob, David
Kerry & Wilma Boonstra - Annette & Josh, Karen, Fred
Pete & Gerda - Peter, Patricia, Micheal, Steven
Liz Dorsman
John & Barb - John, Chris, Daniel, Ryan
Jim & Helen Herrewynen - Matt, Christin, Brandon

She is a sister to:

(Late) Co & Jaap Nagtegaal Piet & Marie Kranenburg
Nel & (Late) Wim Nagtegaal Henk & Corrie Kranenburg
Gon & Gijls Bergman

Mom will be sadly missed by family and friends.

Thank You for your Christian love, faithfulness, kindness, and generosity.

Correspondence address: Henry Dorsman, 1504 Newlands Crescent
Burlington ON L7M 1N9

Drachten, Friesland
September 17, 1928

Woodstock, Ontario
March 5, 2006

On March 5th, 2006 the LORD took to himself

MARGARETHA YSSELSTEIN nee VanderWerff

Predeceased by her husband Sierp Ysselstein (August 28, 1998)

Mother of:

Nienke & Gustavo Izurieta (Nienke, Natalia) Allentown, Pennsylvania
Peter & Geraldine Ysselstein (Geraldine, Margaretha, Johanna) Arkell, Ontario
John & Helen Ysselstein (Sierp, John, Marc, Daniel, David) Woodstock, Ontario
Sierp & Natalie Ysselstein (Darren, Lee, Joel) Rock Valley, Iowa

She rests in the promise that: *All the days ordained for me
were written in your book
before one of them came to be.*

Psalm 139:16

A celebration of her life was held on March 10, 2006
at Maranatha Christian Reformed Church in Woodstock.

Correspondence: J. Ysselstein, RR#4, Woodstock ON N4S 7V8

I lift up my eyes to the hills -

where does my help come from?

My help comes from the LORD,

The Maker of heaven and earth. Psalm 121:1,2

At Grace Manor, Brampton, Ontario,
our LORD in his infinite wisdom, mercy and love, called home

PIETER DEKOTER

February 24, 1912 - March 28, 2006

Beloved husband of Suzanna DeKoter for nearly 68 years.

Dear father of Larry & Willy, Tony & Mary, Gremer & Case Van Wyk.

Grandfather of Rodney and Marietta, David and Tina, Ken and Leona,

Jeff and Kathy, Susan and Mark Dieleman, Janis and Dave Persenaire,

Stephen and Adria VanWyk, Tina Persenaire, Becky Van Wyk.

Lovingly remembered by 12 great-grandchildren.

Also survived by one sister in The Netherlands and
one brother-in-law and sister-in-law in St. Catharines, Ontario.

The funeral was held in Brampton on Monday, April 3, 2006,
with Rev. H. Praamsma of Holland Christian Homes officiating.

Mailing address: L. DeKoter, 961 Crumlin Side Road, London ON N5V 1R6

June 24, 1954 - March 2, 2006

I have put my hope in your Word. Psalm 119:147b

On March 2, 2006 through a tragic accident
the LORD took home at the age of 51,
our dearly loved son, brother, uncle and father.

DAVID BRIAN WINTER

Sadly missed by all who loved him.

Loving son of Bill & Rita Winter (nee Nydam)

Dear father of Christopher Winter

Loving brother & uncle of:

Wayne & Alison Winter

Charles Winter †1970

Gloria Jean Winter †1953

Glenda †1997 & Bill Scholten - Joshua & Jill, Scottie, Hollie & Brooke
Jeanne & Jack Scholten - Chad, Chantal & Troy

Funeral Service was held on March 8, 2006 in the Springdale
Christian Reformed Church. Pastor Howard McPhee officiating.

Corresponding address: Bill & Rita Winter
67 Hillview Road RR# 4, Bradford ON L3Z 2A6

Ruinerwold June 30, 1910 Drayton, April 4, 2006

Peacefully at Shalom Manor in Grimsby

JANTINA DROST (nee De Weerd)

went home to be with her LORD at the age of 93 years.

Beloved wife of the late Lucas Drost (1970)

Dear mother of: Diny & Hilbert Rumph of Drayton
John & Sharon Drost of Listowel
Luke & Jane Drost of Surrey BC
Grace & Bert Geerlinks of Drayton
Ann & Albert Rumph of Collingwood
Linda & Jake Marissen of Rockwood
Helen & Jerry McClymont of Carlisle
Jenny & Sid Sigtema of Clifford
Alice & Fred Kuper of Moorefield

Loving Oma to 31 grandchildren & 51 great-grandchildren
Predeceased by 2 grandsons:

Christopher Marissen and Ronald Rumph

Romans 8:38-39

Correspondence address: Diny Rumph 23 Edward Street
Drayton, ON N0G 1P0

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Email: inglecrc@telusplanet.net

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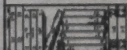
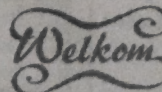
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See page 20 for
additional obituary



**A DUTCH
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Reformed
Church
at 3:00 p.m.
Rev. Ralph
Koops will be
preaching.

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Bill Vantriet,

Search Committee Chair

nacc.search.committee@gmail.com

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min2seaf@colba.net

or PO Box 815

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Montreal Quebec H2Y 3J2

Fax 514 849-2874

**DIRECTOR OF DISABILITY CONCERNS
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The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA)
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experience and involvement with disability issues.

Master's degree or equivalent in an academic or profes-
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bership in or the willingness to become a member of the
Christian Reformed Church is required. Eligibility to work
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In keeping with our Equal Opportunity Policy, **qualified**
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Please visit **www.crcna.org** for more information.

For consideration, submit your resume and a cover letter
(electronic preferred) by **April 24, 2006** to **apply@crcna.org**.
The process will remain open until an appointment is
made.

Search Committee

c/o Director of Personnel

Christian Reformed Church in North America

2850 Kalamazoo Ave. SE

Grand Rapids MI 49560-0500

FAX 616.224.5896

Please see page 22 for more job opportunities.

Job Opportunities/Classifieds

Education

UNITY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, CHILLIWACK, B.C.

Unity Christian Elementary School is located in the eastern Fraser Valley. UCES is an interdenominational school of 135 students in Grades K-6. Applications are now being accepted for the 2006/07 school year. Applicants must hold, or be eligible for, a valid BC Teaching Certificate. The teaching positions are:

- 2 definite maternity leave positions: one primary grade and one intermediate grade
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Please send your cover letter, resume, statement of faith, and a statement of your philosophy of Christian education to:

Rick de Wolde, Principal
Unity Christian School Elementary Campus
PO Box 371
Chilliwack BC V2P 6J4
phone: 604-792-4171 fax: 604-792-0640
or email to : rick.dewolde@unitychristian.ca

THUNDER BAY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

located in the city of Thunder Bay along the beautiful shores of Lake Superior in Northwestern Ontario is currently searching for a

Teaching Principal.

Thunder Bay Christian School is a CSI and OACS-member school founded on Reformed principles, where learning takes place in a Christ-centered atmosphere, preparing students for lives of kingdom service. TBCS has been serving the Christian community in Thunder Bay since 1962. Current enrolment is 164 students from JK to 10.

The ideal candidate will be an experienced administrator, with strong organizational, educational, communication and leadership gifts. This position is divided between 50% administration and 50% teaching. Interested applicants should send a letter of application, resume, statement of faith, philosophy of education and references to the following contact:

Thunder Bay Christian School
 RR#2, 37 Cooper Road, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7C 4V1

Mr. Abraham Drost, Board Chair
 Email: adrost@shaw.ca
 Ph: (807) 473-1968 (Home) Fax: (807) 939-2843 (School)

Application deadline is Friday, April 21, 2006.
 Contract begins August 1, 2006.

For more information on the school you may visit our website at: www.tbcs.thunder-bay.on.ca

CENTENNIAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
TERRACE, B. C.
TEACHING POSITION OPEN

Centennial Christian School invites applications for a definite opening for a High School Math teaching position beginning September 2006. Other possible high school positions in French and other subjects may also be available.

Centennial Christian School is located in the beautiful Pacific Northwest area of British Columbia. Centennial Christian School is an inter-denominational school with a teaching staff of 19 and a support staff of 10, and presently offers Christian education to 200 students in Kindergarten - Grade 12. Please contact the principal or vice principal for further details and send letter of application, resume and other information to:

Centennial Christian School
Curtis Tuininga - Principal
Edgar Veldman - Vice Principal
3608 Sparks Street
Terrace BC V8G 2V6
Phone (250) 635-6173 Fax (250) 635-9385
Email ccs@telus.net
Website www.centennialchristian.ca

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Arie Hoogerbrugge

Associate Broker

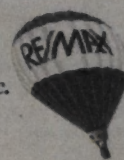
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ANNUAL
FESTIVAL OF PRAISE
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Saturday, April 29, at 7:30 p.m.

Presented by the
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Interdenominational Christian
 Men's Choir Association
 Forest City Community Church,
 3725 Bostwick Road, London.

Over 200 voices will be
 singing in the combined choirs of
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Tickets are \$13.00 available from
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 Osoyoos - CJOR 8:00 am 1490
 Prince George - CIRX 7:00 am 94.3
 Princeton - CHOR 8:00 am 1400
 Smithers - CFBV 9:15 am 1230
 Vernon - CJIB 9:30 pm 94

ALBERTA

Brooks - CIBQ 8:30 am 1340
 Edmonton - CJCA 6:00 pm 930

MANITOBA

Winnipeg - CKJS 9:00 am 810

ONTARIO

Atikokan - CFAK 9:30 am 1240
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 Hamilton - CHAM 7:30 am 820
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 Owen Sound - CFOS 7:00 am 560
 Samia - CHOK 7:30 am 1070
 Stratford - CJCS 8:45 am 1240
 Wingham - CKNX 10:30 am 920
 Woodstock - CJFH 7:30 am 94.03

NEW BRUNSWICK

Saint John - CHSJ 9:00 am 94.1

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 Rocky Mtn.House CHBW 94.5 FM. Sun. 8:30 am

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ONTARIO

Oshawa CKDO 1350 AMSat. 8 am
 Woodstock CJFH 94.3 FMSat. 8 am

SASKATCHEWAN

Estevan CJSL 1280 AMSun. 7 am
 Weyburn CJSL 1190 AMSun. 7 am

Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Apr. 29 Disability Concerns conference "Journey with Me!" Bethel CRC in **Waterdown, ON.**

Apr 29 The Southwestern Interdenominational Christian Men's Choir Association will present their annual Festival of Praise concert at 7:30 p.m. Forest City Community Church, 3725 Bostwick Road, in **London.** Over 200 voices will be singing in the combined choirs of Woodstock, Chatham, Clinton, St Thomas, and Samia. Special guest soloist will be Jane Valenti. Tickets are \$13.00 each and are available from any of the choir members, Merrifield Book Shop, the Christian Armory store in Woodstock, or by calling (519)456-5075

May 6, 7 Grace CRC, **Coburg**, 50th anniversary. All invited to join in celebrations. Biletting available. Call 905-372-3642 or email: grace.church@bellnet.ca. Website: www.cobourggrace.org

May 6 Combined 85 voices by the "Crescendo" Male Choir, St. Thomas and The Ottawa Carleton Male Choir present a "Concert of Sacred Song and Music". Special guest soloist Renee Stalenhoef, soprano. Saturday evening at 7:30 p.m. St. Paul's Congregational Church, 450 Park Ave. **Chatham.** Tickets \$10.00. Advance: 351-7151 or at the door. Information (519) 637-4357.

May 7 Combined 85 voices by the "Crescendo" Male Choir, St. Thomas and The Ottawa Carleton Male Choir present a "Concert of Sacred Song and Music". Special guest soloist Renee Stalenhoef, soprano. Sunday evening at 7:30 p.m. Knox Presbyterian Church, 55 Hincks Street, **St. Thomas.** Freewill offering for the Canadian Bible Society. Information: (519) 637-4357.

May 12,13 Jarvis District Christian School, 50th anniversary. On Friday evening - dinner and an evening program. Tickets available from February 15 to March 31, 2006. Seating is limited. Payment of \$50.00 per ticket must accompany order. Various activities are planned for Saturday concluding with a service of Thanksgiving at the neighbouring CRC at 7:00 p.m. For more information visit www.jdcs.ca and to purchase tickets contact Marcia Cota (519)587-3111.

May 21 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Ralph Koops will be preaching.

Oct 27-29 Hamilton District Christian High School 50th anniversary weekend. For information about activities or to register as alumni: www.hdch.org or 905.648.6655



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Advance tickets: Chatham: 351-7151

St. Thomas: 637-4357

Sunday, May 7, 7:30 PM

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

55 Hincks Street, St. Thomas

Freewill Offering for the Canadian Bible Society.

For information: (519) 637- 4357

JOURNEY WITH ME

Disability Concerns - Eastern Canada

A Conference for Disability Concerns Contact Persons, Pastoral Care Workers, Pastors, Persons with Disabilities, & Care Givers

April 29, 2006

Bethel CRC, 606 Dundas St. E.
Waterdown ON L0R 2H0

For information contact:

Kim Vanderniet vandernietk@rcna.ca 800-730-3490
Hank Kuntz hkuntz@pathcom.com 416-741-3092

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EUROPE & WORLDWIDE

News



Canada's Afghanistan mission and MCC's commitment to nonviolence

Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan will both challenge and strengthen Mennonite Central Committee's (MCC) traditional commitment to nonviolence, says the coordinator of MCC Canada's peace and justice program.

"MCC's commitment to peace arises out of our Christian commitment to the way of Jesus," says Esther Epp Tiessen. "We believe that Jesus lived and taught the way of nonviolent love. As Christians we believe we are called to follow Jesus' way of nonviolence."

MCC's response (and that of its supporting churches) to Canada's mission in Afghanistan – a part of the so-called "war on terror" – will simply be the most current manifestation of a commitment to nonviolence that has survived the centuries.

Traditionally, Mennonite commitment to peacemaking has meant a refusal to go to war and to take up the sword, but it has not involved a critique of war itself. The early Anabaptist understood the world in terms of two kingdoms: the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of those who commit their lives to Christ, explains Epp Tiessen.

"They realized that armed force, war and 'taking up the sword' were part of the reality of the kingdom of the world. They argued that because their loyalty was to the kingdom of Christ, they could not participate in this. They believed that their calling was to live

out the nonviolent way of Christ in their communities and, in doing so, they could be a witness to others."

This is largely the kind of thinking that guided Canadian Mennonites and Brethren in Christ churches until World War II. During World Wars I and II, Mennonites' concern was: would Canada provide means whereby their commitments not to go to war and to be "conscientious objectors" would be honored? They did not really challenge Canada's decision to go to war.

This has changed in the last 30-40 years. As a result of Mennonites' increasing involvement in the larger society, some Mennonites have begun to speak out more against war and preparations for war itself.

It is because of this shift, and also because of MCC's experience in contexts of violence around the world, that MCC now also raises questions and concerns about issues like the waging of war, military intervention and the production and export of military weapons.

With respect to Afghanistan, Epp-Tiessen questions whether combat missions will improve the security situation in that country or diminish the threat of terrorism in Canada. Terrorist acts, she suggests, should be considered and treated as crimes, rather than acts of war. Dealing with terrorists then becomes an act of law enforcement, rather than an act of war.

"MCC's own experience in working

in conflict zones around the world is that violence usually contributes to more violence. The way you deal with terrorism is to take away the oxygen that fuels the fire – you address the grievances that make people angry.

"As much as we may find terrorist tactics illegitimate and abhorrent, Canada should expend energy in finding out what the legitimate concerns of the terrorists are and addressing those concerns. We have to address the root causes that push people to take up arms."

MCC, along with the faith communities and individuals supporting MCC, are advocating for non-violent means to pursue peace. Canada, she said, could strengthen its reputation as a peace-promoting nation through devoting more resources for training in the areas of conflict resolution, mediation and negotiation, human rights advocacy and other forms of peace building.

Canada can also be a leader in addressing global poverty and injustice by cancelling debt, promoting trade that is just, and increasing development assistance. Such development assistance currently stands at about 0.32 per cent of the Canada's gross national income and should be boosted to meet the 0.7 per cent target which is one of the Millennium Development Goals set by United Nations member countries in 2000.

— With files from Gladys Terichow, MCC Canada staff writer.

News briefs

Happier women

Meghan O'Rourke, writing in *Slate*, reported that two sociologists at the University of Virginia, on the basis of an exhaustive study of marital happiness among women conducted between 1992 and 1994, have discovered that traditionalist women tend to be happier than their feminist counterparts.

Stay-at-home wives, according to the authors, are more content than their working counterparts. And happiness, they found, has less to do with division of labor than with the level of commitment and "emotional work" men contribute (or are perceived to contribute). Those women who identify themselves as progressive – the 15 percent who agree most with feminist ideals – have a harder time being happy than their peers.

O'Rourke speculates: "Feminist ideals, not domestic duties, seem to be what make wives morose. Progressive married women – who should be enjoying some or all of the fruits that [feminists] lobbied for – are less happy, it would appear, than women who live as if [feminism] never existed."

Do such surveys prove anything? Perhaps only that those who push for change, like idealists in general, tend to expect too much. Hence, the link between idealism and disillusionment. Perhaps, too, it has something to do with Ecclesiastes' remarks on trying to be too wise (See Van Ruler).

"Health expectancy"

Numerous warnings have been issued about the stress that the ageing baby-boomers will put on health-care resources as they develop the maladies of old age. A study by the US Census Bureau, however, says that the economic and social impact of baby boomer decrepitation may be gentler than had been feared. They are healthier than previous generations reaching retirement and fewer of them have disabilities.

Demographers speak of "health expectancy" as well as life expectancy. The first of the baby boomers begin retiring in five years (the boom began nine months after the end of WWII). Of course a longer health expectancy only delays the inevitable. At some point our teeth and our knees are going to give out, our hearts are going to sputter, and then we're going to hobble to the phone to call a doctor.

Unless, of course, instead of ageing gradually, we all break down completely all over at the same time.

Maybe that's what the long-term planners are hoping for.

Commuting tolls

London and Stockholm have been trying to keep cars out of their city centres, especially at peak times. During specific hours they charge a toll to enter the city. And it has proved successful, as more people have switched to public transit to avoid the \$3 tolls.

According to one study, because of the new toll system, those commuting from the suburbs to Stockholm by car will be spending around \$1,000 more per year.

Contrary to fears of downtown merchants, their business has not dropped off; in fact, it has increased. Apparently, city-dwellers are now less likely to drive out to shopping malls.

I think my doctor must have read the study. The toll at the parking lot of his medical building has been raised to \$3. He's trying to discourage commuters.